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THE IDLE THOUGHTS

OF

AN IDLE FELLOW.

STAGE LAND.

By JEROME K. JEROME.

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**TO
THE VERY DEAR AND WELL-BELOVED
FRIEND**

OF MY PROSPEROUS AND EVIL DAYS—

**TO THE FRIEND
WHO, THOUGH IN THE EARLY STAGES OF OUR ACQUAINTANCE-
SHIP DID OFTTIMES DISAGREE WITH ME, HAS SINCE
BECOME TO BE MY VERY WARMEST COMRADE—**

**TO THE FRIEND
WHO, HOWEVER OFTEN I MAY PUT HIM OUT, NEVER (NOW)
UPSETS ME IN REVENGE—**

**TO THE FRIEND
WHO, TREATED WITH MARKED COOLNESS BY ALL THE FEMALE
MEMBERS OF MY HOUSEHOLD, AND REGARDED WITH SUSPI-
CION BY MY VERY DOG, NEVERTHELESS SEEMS DAY BY
DAY TO BE MORE DRAWN BY ME, AND IN RETURN
TO MORE AND MORE IMPREGNATE ME WITH
THE ODOR OF HIS FRIENDSHIP—**

**TO THE FRIEND
WHO NEVER TELLS ME OF MY FAULTS, NEVER WANTS TO
BORROW MONEY, AND NEVER TALKS ABOUT HIMSELF—**

**TO THE COMPANION
OF MY IDLE HOURS, THE SOOTHER OF MY SORROWS,
THE CONFIDANT OF MY JOYS AND HOPES—**

MY OLDEST AND STRONGEST

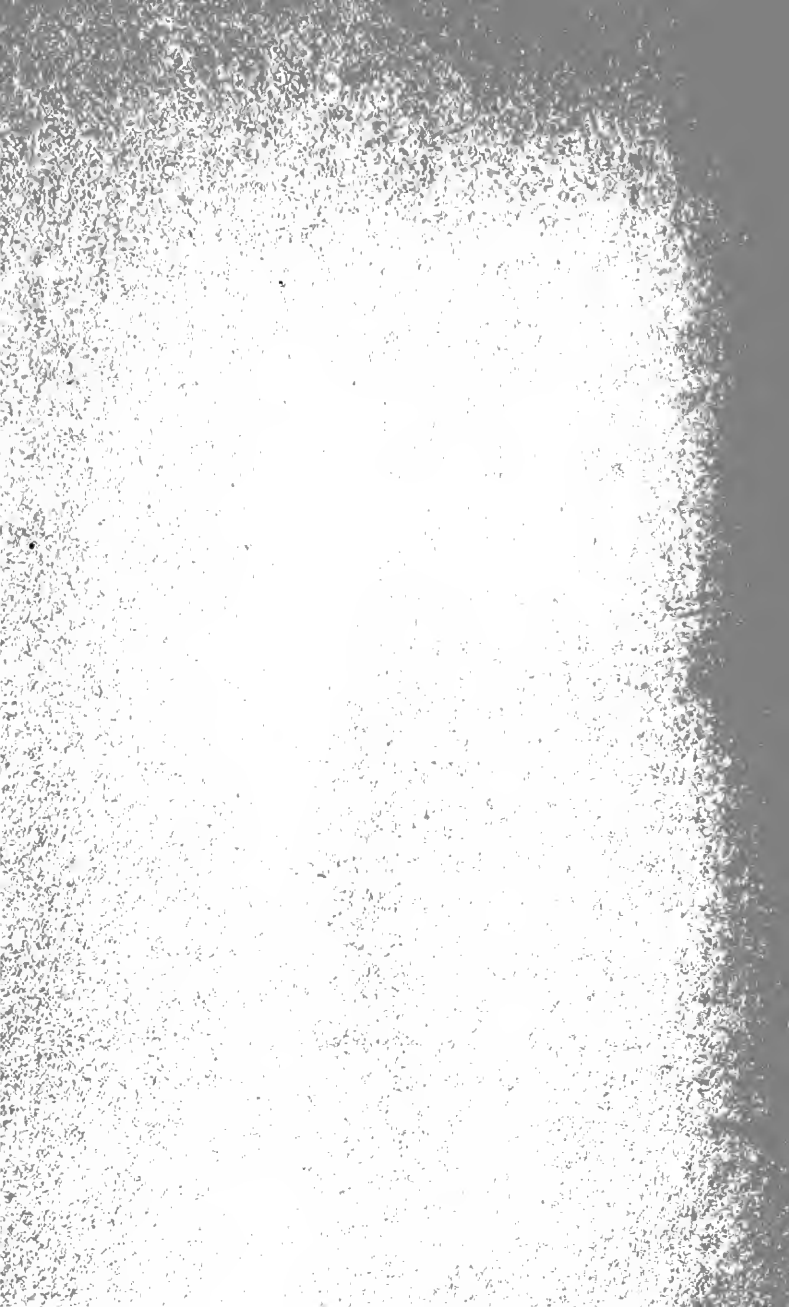
PIPE,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS

GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED.



PREFACE

ONE or two friends to whom I showed these papers in MS. having observed that they were not half bad, and some of my relations having promised to buy the book if it ever came out, I feel I have no right to longer delay its issue. But for this, as one may say, public demand, I perhaps should not have ventured to offer these mere "idle thoughts" of mine as mental food for the English-speaking peoples of the earth. What readers ask nowadays in a book is that it should improve, instruct, and elevate. This book wouldn't elevate a cow. I cannot conscientiously recommend it for any useful purposes whatever. All I can suggest is that when you get tired of reading "the best hundred books," you may take this up for half an hour. It will be a change.

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The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow.

ON BEING IDLE.

Now, this is a subject on which I flatter myself I really am *au fait*. The gentleman who, when I was young, bathed me at wisdom's font for nine guineas a term—no extras—used to say he never knew a boy who could do less work in more time; and I remember my poor grandmother once incidentally observing, in the course of an instruction upon the use of the Prayer-book, that it was highly improbable that I should ever do much that I ought not to do, but that she felt convinced beyond a doubt that I should leave undone pretty well everything that I ought to do.

I am afraid I have somewhat belied half the dear old lady's prophecy. Heaven help me! I have done a good many things that I ought not to have done, in spite of my laziness. But I have fully confirmed the accuracy of her judgment so far as neglecting much that I ought not to have neglected is concerned. Idling always has been my strong point. I take no credit to myself in the matter—it

is a gift. Few possess it. There are plenty of lazy people and plenty of slow-coaches, but a genuine idler is a rarity. He is not a man who slouches about with his hands in his pockets. On the contrary, his most startling characteristic is that he is always intensely busy.

It is impossible to enjoy idling thoroughly unless one has plenty of work to do. There is no fun in doing nothing when you have nothing to do. Wasting time is merely an occupation then, and a most exhausting one. Idleness, like kisses, to be sweet must be stolen.

Many years ago, when I was a young man, I was taken very ill—I never could see myself that much was the matter with me, except that I had a beastly cold. But I suppose it was something very serious, for the doctor said that I ought to have come to him a month before, and that if it (whatever it was) had gone on for another week he would not have answered for the consequences. It is an extraordinary thing, but I never knew a doctor called into any case yet but what it transpired that another day's delay would have rendered cure hopeless. Our medical guide, philosopher, and friend is like the hero in a melodrama—he always comes upon the scene just, and only just, in the nick of time. It is Providence, that is what it is.

Well, as I was saying, I was very ill and was ordered to Buxton for a month, with strict injunctions to do nothing whatever all the while that I was there. "Rest is what you require," said the doctor. "perfect rest."

It seemed a delightful prospect. "This man evidently understands my complaint," said I, and I pictured to myself a glorious time—a four weeks' *dolce far niente* with a dash of illness in it. Not too much illness, but just illness enough—just sufficient to give it the flavor of suffering and make it poetical. I should get up late, sip chocolate, and have my breakfast in slippers and a dressing-gown. I should lie out in the garden in a hammock and read sentimental novels with a melancholy ending, until the books should fall from my listless hand, and I should recline there, dreamily gazing into the deep blue of the firmament, watching the fleecy clouds floating like white-sailed ships across its depths, and listening to the joyous song of the birds and the low rustling of the trees. Or, on becoming too weak to go out of doors, I should sit propped up with pillows at the open window of the ground-floor front, and look wasted and interesting, so that all the pretty girls would sigh as they passed by.

And twice a day I should go down in a Bath chair to the Colonnade to drink the waters. Oh, those waters! I knew nothing about them then, and was rather taken with the idea. "Drinking the waters" sounded fashionable and Queen Anne-fied, and I thought I should like them. But, ugh! after the first three or four mornings! Sam Weller's description of them as "having a taste of warm flat-irons" conveys only a faint idea of their hideous nauseousness. If anything could make a sick man get well quickly, it would be the knowledge that he

must drink a glassful of them every day until he was recovered. I drank them neat for six consecutive days, and they nearly killed me; but after then I adopted the plan of taking a stiff glass of brandy-and-water immediately on the top of them, and found much relief thereby. I have been informed since, by various eminent medical gentlemen, that the alcohol must have entirely counteracted the effects of the chalybeate properties contained in the water. I am glad I was lucky enough to hit upon the right thing.

But "drinking the waters" was only a small portion of the torture I experienced during that memorable month—a month which was, without exception, the most miserable I have ever spent. During the best part of it I religiously followed the doctor's mandate and did nothing whatever, except moon about the house and garden and go out for two hours a day in a Bath chair. That did break the monotony to a certain extent. There is more excitement about Bath-chairing—especially if you are not used to the exhilarating exercise—than might appear to the casual observer. A sense of danger, such as a mere outsider might not understand, is ever present to the mind of the occupant. He feels convinced every minute that the whole concern is going over, a conviction which becomes especially lively whenever a ditch or a stretch of newly macadamized road comes in sight. Every vehicle that passes he expects is going to run into him; and he never finds himself ascending or descending a hill without im-

mediately beginning to speculate upon his chances, supposing—as seems extremely probable—that the weak-kneed controller of his destiny should let go.

But even this diversion failed to enliven after awhile, and the *ennui* became perfectly unbearable. I felt my mind giving way under it. It is not a strong mind, and I thought it would be unwise to tax it too far. So somewhere about the twentieth morning I got up early, had a good breakfast, and walked straight off to Hayfield, at the foot of the Kinder Scout—a pleasant, busy little town, reached through a lovely valley, and with two sweetly pretty women in it. At least they were sweetly pretty then; one passed me on the bridge and, I think, smiled; and the other was standing at an open door, making an unremunerative investment of kisses upon a red-faced baby. But it is years ago, and I dare say they have both grown stout and snappish since that time. Coming back, I saw an old man breaking stones, and it roused such strong longing in me to use my arms that I offered him a drink to let me take his place. He was a kindly old man and he humored me. I went for those stones with the accumulated energy of three weeks, and did more work in half an hour than he had done all day. But it did not make him jealous.

Having taken the plunge, I went further and further into dissipation, going out for a long walk every morning and listening to the band in the pavilion every evening. But the days still passed slowly notwithstanding, and I was heartily glad

when the last one came and I was being whirled away from gouty, consumptive Buxton to London with its stern work and life. I looked out of the carriage as we rushed through Hendon in the evening. The lurid glare overhanging the mighty city seemed to warm my heart, and when, later on, my cab rattled out of St. Pancras' station, the old familiar roar that came swelling up around me sounded the sweetest music I had heard for many a long day.

I certainly did not enjoy that month's idling. I like idling when I ought not to be idling; not when it is the only thing I have to do. That is my pig-headed nature. The time when I like best to stand with my back to the fire, calculating how much I owe, is when my desk is heaped highest with letters that must be answered by the next post. When I like to dawdle longest over my dinner is when I have a heavy evening's work before me. And if, for some urgent reason, I ought to be up particularly early in the morning, it is then, more than at any other time, that I love to lie an extra half-hour in bed.

Ah! how delicious it is to turn over and go to sleep again: "just for five minutes." Is there any human being, I wonder, besides the hero of a Sunday-school "tale for boys," who ever gets up willingly? There are some men to whom getting up at the proper time is an utter impossibility. If eight o'clock happens to be the time that they should turn out, then they lie till half-past. If circum-

stances change and half-past eight becomes early enough for them, then it is nine before they can rise. They are like the statesman of whom it was said that he was always punctually half an hour late. They try all manner of schemes. They buy alarm-clocks (artful contrivances that go off at the wrong time and alarm the wrong people). They tell Sarah Jane to knock at the door and call them, and Sarah Jane does knock at the door and does call them, and they grunt back "awri" and then go comfortably to sleep again. I knew one man who would actually get out and have a cold bath; and even that was of no use, for afterward he would jump into bed again to warm himself.

I think myself that I could keep out of bed all right if I once got out. It is the wrenching away of the head from the pillow that I find so hard, and no amount of over-night determination makes it easier. I say to myself, after having wasted the whole evening, "Well, I won't do any more work to-night; I'll get up early to-morrow morning;" and I am thoroughly resolved to do so—then. In the morning, however, I feel less enthusiastic about the idea, and reflect that it would have been much better if I had stopped up last night. And then there is the trouble of dressing, and the more one thinks about that the more one wants to put it off.

It is a strange thing this bed, this mimic grave, where we stretch our tired limbs and sink away so quietly into the silence and rest. "O bed, O bed, delicious bed, that heaven on earth to the

weary head," as sang poor Hood, you are a kind old nurse to us fretful boys and girls. Clever and foolish, naughty and good, you take us all in your motherly lap and hush our wayward crying. The strong man full of care—the sick man full of pain—the little maiden sobbing for her faithless lover—like children we lay our aching heads on your white bosom, and you gently soothe us off to by-by.

Our trouble is sore indeed when you turn away and will not comfort us. How long the dawn seems coming when we cannot sleep! Oh! those hideous nights when we toss and turn in fever and pain, when we lie, like living men among the dead, staring out into the dark hours that drift so slowly between us and the light. And oh! those still more hideous nights when we sit by another in pain, when the low fire startles us every now and then with a falling cinder, and the tick of the clock seems a hammer beating out the life that we are watching.

But enough of beds and bedrooms. I have kept to them too long, even for an idle fellow. Let us come out and have a smoke. That wastes time just as well and does not look so bad. Tobacco has been a blessing to us idlers. What the civil-service clerks before Sir Walter's time found to occupy their minds with it is hard to imagine. I attribute the quarrelsome nature of the Middle Ages young men entirely to the want of the soothing weed. They had no work to do and could not smoke, and the

consequence was they were forever fighting and rowing. If, by any extraordinary chance, there was no war going, then they got up a deadly family feud with the next-door neighbor, and if, in spite of this, they still had a few spare moments on their hands, they occupied them with discussions as to whose sweetheart was the best looking, the arguments employed on both sides being battle-axes, clubs, etc. Questions of taste were soon decided in those days. When a twelfth-century youth fell in love he did not take three paces backward, gaze into her eyes, and tell her she was too beautiful to live. He said he would step outside and see about it. And if, when he got out, he met a man and broke his head—the other man's head, I mean—then that proved that his—the first fellow's—girl was a pretty girl. But if the other fellow broke *his* head—not his own, you know, but the other fellow's—the other fellow to the second fellow, that is, because of course the other fellow would only be the other fellow to him, not the first fellow who—well, if he broke his head, then *his* girl—not the other fellow's, but the fellow who *was* the— Look here, if A broke B's head, then A's girl was a pretty girl; but if B broke A's head, then A's girl wasn't a pretty girl, but B's girl was. That was their method of conducting art criticism.

Nowadays we light a pipe and let the girls fight it out among themselves.

They do it very well. They are getting to do all our work. They are doctors, and barristers, and

artists. They magage theaters, and promote swindles, and edit newspapers. I am looking forward to the time when we men shall have nothing to do but lie in bed till twelve, read two novels a day, have nice little five-o'clock teas all to ourselves, and tax our brains with nothing more trying than discussions upon the latest patterns in trousers and arguments as to what Mr. Jones' coat was made of and whether it fitted him. It is a glorious prospect—for idle fellows.

ON BEING IN LOVE

YOU'VE been in love, of course! If not you've got it to come. Love is like the measles; we all have to go through it. Also like the measles, we take it only once. One never need be afraid of catching it a second time. The man who has had it can go into the most dangerous places and play the most foolhardy tricks with perfect safety. He can picnic in shady woods, ramble through leafy aisles, and linger on mossy seats to watch the sunset. He fears a quiet country-house no more than he would his own club. He can join a family party to go down the Rhine. He can, to see the last of a friend, venture into the very jaws of the marriage ceremony itself. He can keep his head through the whirl of a ravishing waltz, and rest afterward in a dark conservatory, catching nothing more lasting than a cold. He can brave a moonlight walk adown sweet-scented lanes or a twilight pull among the somber rushes. He can get over a stile without danger, scramble through a tangled hedge without being caught, come down a slippery path without falling. He can look into sunny eyes and not be dazzled. He listens to the siren voices, yet sails on with un veered helm. He clasps white hands in his,

but no electric "Lulu"-like force holds him bound in their dainty pressure.

No, we never sicken with love twice. Cupid spends no second arrow on the same heart. Love's handmaids are our life-long friends. Respect, and admiration, and affection, our doors may always be left open for, but their great celestial master, in his royal progress, pays but one visit and departs. We like, we cherish, we are very, very fond of—but we never love again. A man's heart is a firework that once in its time flashes heavenward. Meteor-like, it blazes for a moment and lights with its glory the whole world beneath. Then the night of our sordid commonplace life closes in around it, and the burned-out case, falling back to earth, lies useless and uncared for, slowly smoldering into ashes. Once, breaking loose from our prison bonds, we dare, as mighty old Prometheus dared, to scale the Olympian mount and snatch from Phœbus' chariot the fire of the gods. Happy those who, hastening down again ere it dies out, can kindle their earthly altars at its flame. Love is too pure a light to burn long among the noisome gases that we breathe, but before it is choked out we may use it as a torch to ignite the cozy fire of affection.

And, after all, that warming glow is more suited to our cold little back parlor of a world than is the burning spirit love. Love should be the vestal fire of some mighty temple—some vast dim fane whose organ music is the rolling of the spheres. Affection will burn cheerily when the white flame of love is

flickered out. Affection is a fire that can be fed from day to day and be piled up ever higher as the wintry years draw nigh. Old men and women can sit by it with their thin hands clasped, the little children can nestle down in front, the friend and neighbor has his welcome corner by its side, and even shaggy Fido and sleek Titty can toast their noses at the bars.

Let us heap the coals of kindness upon that fire. Throw on your pleasant words, your gentle pressures of the hand, your thoughtful and unselfish deeds. Fan it with good-humor, patience, and forbearance. You can let the wind blow and the rain fall unheeded then, for your hearth will be warm and bright, and the faces round it will make sunshine in spite of the clouds without.

I am afraid, dear Edwin and Angelina, you expect too much from love. You think there is enough of your little hearts to feed this fierce, devouring passion for all your long lives. Ah, young folk! don't rely too much upon that unsteady flicker. It will dwindle and dwindle as the months roll on, and there is no replenishing the fuel. You will watch it die out in anger and disappointment. To each it will seem that it is the other who is growing colder. Edwin sees with bitterness that Angelina no longer runs to the gate to meet him, all smiles and blushes; and when he has a cough now she doesn't begin to cry and, putting her arms round his neck, say that she cannot live without him. The most she will probably do is to suggest a lozenge, and even that

in a tone implying that it is the noise more than anything else she is anxious to get rid of.

Poor little Angelina, too, sheds silent tears, for Edwin has given up carrying her old handkerchief in the inside pocket of his waistcoat.

Both are astonished at the falling off in the other one, but neither sees their own change. If they did they would not suffer as they do. They would look for the cause in the right quarter—in the littleness of poor human nature—join hands over their common failing, and start building their house anew on a more earthly and enduring foundation. But we are so blind to our own shortcomings, so wide awake to those of others. Everything that happens to us is always the other person's fault. Angelina would have gone on loving Edwin forever and ever and ever if only Edwin had not grown so strange and different. Edwin would have adored Angelina through eternity if Angelina had only remained the same as when he first adored her.

It is a cheerless hour for you both when the lamp of love has gone out and the fire of affection is not yet lit, and you have to grope about in the cold, raw dawn of life to kindle it. God grant it catches light before the day is too far spent. Many sit shivering by the dead coals till night come.

But, there, of what use is it to preach? Who that feels the rush of young love through his veins can think it will ever flow feeble and slow! To the boy of twenty it seems impossible that he will not love as wildly at sixty as he does then. He cannot

call to mind any middle-aged or elderly gentleman of his acquaintance who is known to exhibit symptoms of frantic attachment, but that does not interfere in his belief in himself. His love will never fail, whoever else's may. Nobody ever loved as he loves, and so, of course, the rest of the world's experience can be no guide in his case. Alas! alas! ere thirty he has joined the ranks of the sneerers. It is not his fault. Our passions, both the good and bad, cease with our blushes. We do not hate, nor grieve, nor joy, nor despair in our thirties like we did in our teens. Disappointment does not suggest suicide, and we quaff success without intoxication.

We take all things in a minor key as we grow older. There are few majestic passages in the later acts of life's opera. Ambition takes a less ambitious aim. Honor becomes more reasonable and conveniently adapts itself to circumstances. And love—love dies. "Irreverence for the dreams of youth" soon creeps like a killing frost upon our hearts. The tender shoots and the expanding flowers are nipped and withered, and of a vine that yearned to stretch its tendrils round the world there is left but a sapless stump.

My fair friends will deem all this rank heresy, I know. So far from a man's not loving after he has passed boyhood, it is not till there is a good deal of gray in his hair that they think his protestations at all worthy of attention. Young ladies take their notions of our sex from the novels written by their own, and compared with the monstrosities that

masquerade for men in the pages of that nightmare literature, Pythagoras' plucked bird and Frankenstein's demon were fair average specimens of humanity.

In these so-called books, the chief lover, or Greek god, as he is admiringly referred to—by the way, they do not say which "Greek god" it is that the gentleman bears such a striking likeness to; it might be hump-backed Vulcan, or double-faced Janus, or even driveling Silenus, the god of abstruse mysteries. He resembles the whole family of them, however, in being a blackguard, and perhaps this is what is meant. To even the little manliness his classical prototypes possessed, though, he can lay no claim whatever, being a listless effeminate noodle, on the shady side of forty. But oh! the depth and strength of this elderly party's emotion for some bread-and-butter school-girl! Hide your heads, ye young Romeos and Leanders! this *blasé* old beau loves with an hysterical fervor that requires four adjectives to every noun to properly describe.

It is well, dear ladies, for us old sinners that you study only books. Did you read mankind, you would know that the lad's shy stammering tells a truer tale than our bold eloquence. A boy's love comes from a full heart; a man's is more often the result of a full stomach. Indeed, a man's sluggish current may not be called love, compared with the rushing fountain that wells up when a boy's heart is struck with the heavenly rod. If you would taste love, drink of the pure stream that youth pours out

at your feet. Do not wait till it has become a muddy river before you stoop to catch its waves.

Or is it that you like its bitter flavor—that the clear, limpid water is insipid to your palate and that the pollution of its after-course gives it a relish to your lips? Must we believe those who tell us that a hand foul with the filth of a shameful life is the only one a young girl cares to be caressed by?

That is the teaching that is bawled out day by day from between those yellow covers. Do they ever pause to think, I wonder, those devil's lady-helps, what mischief they are doing crawling about God's garden, and telling childish Eves and silly Adams that sin is sweet and that decency is ridiculous and vulgar? How many an innocent girl do they not degrade into an evil-minded woman? To how many a weak lad do they not point out the dirty by-path as the shortest cut to a maiden's heart? It is not as if they wrote of life as it really is. Speak truth, and right will take care of itself. But their pictures are coarse daubs painted from the sickly fancies of their own diseased imagination.

We want to think of women not—as their own sex would show them—as *Lorleis* luring us to destruction, but as good angels beckoning us upward. They have more power for good or evil than they dream of. It is just at the very age when a man's character is forming that he tumbles into love, and then the lass he loves has the making or marring of him. Unconsciously he molds himself to what she would have him, good or bad. I am sorry to have

to be ungallant enough to say that I do not think they always use their influence for the best. Too often the female world is bounded hard and fast within the limits of the commonplace. Their ideal hero is a prince of littleness, and to become that many a powerful mind, enchanted by love, is "lost to life and use and name and fame."

And yet, women, you could make us so much better if you only would. It rests with you, more than with all the preachers, to roll this world a little nearer heaven. Chivalry is not dead: it only sleeps for want of work to do. It is you who must wake it to noble deeds. You must be worthy of knightly worship.

You must be higher than ourselves. It was for Una that the Red Cross Knight did war. For no painted, mincing court dame could the dragon have been slain. Oh, ladies fair, be fair in mind and soul as well as face, so that brave knights may win glory in your service! Oh, woman, throw off your disguising cloaks of selfishness, effrontery, and affectation! Stand forth once more a queen in your royal robe of simple purity. A thousand swords, now rusting in ignoble sloth, shall leap from their scabbards to do battle for your honor against wrong. A thousand Sir Rolands shall lay lance in rest, and Fear, Avarice, Pleasure, and Ambition shall go down in the dust before your colors.

What noble deeds were we not ripe for in the days when we loved? What noble lives could we not have lived for her sake? Our love was a re-

ligion we could have died for. It was no mere human creature like ourselves that we adored. It was a queen that we paid homage to, a goddess that we worshiped.

And how madly we did worship! And how sweet it was to worship! Ah, lad, cherish love's young dream while it lasts! You will know too soon how truly little Tom Moore sang when he said that there was nothing half so sweet in life. Even when it brings misery it is a wild, romantic misery, all unlike the dull, worldly pain of after-sorrows. When you have lost her—when the light is gone out from your life and the world stretches before you a long, dark horror, even then a half-enchantment mingles with your despair.

And who would not risk its terrors to gain its raptures? Ah, what raptures they were! The mere recollection thrills you. How delicious it was to tell her that you loved her, that you lived for her, that you would die for her! How you did rave, to be sure, what floods of extravagant nonsense you poured forth, and oh, how cruel it was of her to pretend not to believe you! In what awe you stood of her! How miserable you were when you had offended her! And yet, how pleasant to be bullied by her and to sue for pardon without having the slightest notion of what your fault was! How dark the world was when she snubbed you, as she often did, the little rogue, just to see you look wretched; how sunny when she smiled! How jealous you were of every one about her! How you

hated every man she shook hands with, every woman she kissed—the maid that did her hair, the boy that cleaned her shoes, the dog she nursed—though you had to be respectful to the last-named! How you looked forward to seeing her, how stupid you were when you did see her, staring at her without saying a word! How impossible it was for you to go out at any time of the day or night without finding yourself eventually opposite her windows! You hadn't pluck enough to go in, but you hung about the corner and gazed at the outside. Oh, if the house had only caught fire—it was insured, so it wouldn't have mattered—and you could have rushed in and saved her at the risk of your life, and have been terribly burned and injured! Anything to serve her. Even in little things that was so sweet. How you would watch her, spaniel-like, to anticipate her slightest wish! How proud you were to do her bidding! How delightful it was to be ordered about by her! To devote your whole life to her and to never think of yourself seemed such a simple thing. You would go without a holiday to lay a humble offering at her shrine, and felt more than repaid if she only deigned to accept it. How precious to you was everything that she had hallowed by her touch—her little glove, the ribbon she had worn, the rose that had nestled in her hair and whose withered leaves still mark the poems you never care to look at now.

And oh, how beautiful she was, how wondrous beautiful! It was as some angel entering the room,

and all else became plain and earthly. She was too sacred to be touched. It seemed almost presumption to gaze at her. You would as soon have thought of kissing her as of singing comic songs in a cathedral. It was desecration enough to kneel and timidly raise the gracious little hand to your lips.

Ah, those foolish days, those foolish days when we were unselfish and pure-minded; those foolish days when our simple hearts were full of truth, and faith, and reverence! Ah, those foolish days of noble longings and of noble strivings! And oh, these wise, clever days when we know that money is the only prize worth striving for, when we believe in nothing else but meanness and lies, when we care for no living creature but ourselves!

ON BEING IN THE BLUES.

I CAN enjoy feeling melancholy, and there is a good deal of satisfaction about being thoroughly miserable; but nobody likes a fit of the blues. Nevertheless, everybody has them; notwithstanding which, nobody can tell why. There is no accounting for them. You are just as likely to have one on the day after you have come into a large fortune as on the day after you have left your new silk umbrella in the train. Its effect upon you is somewhat similar to what would probably be produced by a combined attack of toothache, indigestion, and cold in the head. You become stupid, restless, and irritable; rude to strangers and dangerous toward your friends; clumsy, maudlin, and quarrelsome; a nuisance to yourself and everybody about you.

While it is on you can do nothing and think of nothing, though feeling at the time bound to do something. You can't sit still, so put on your hat and go for a walk; but before you get to the corner of the street you wish you hadn't come out and you turn back. You open a book and try to read, but you find Shakespeare trite and commonplace, Dickens is dull and prosy, Thackeray a bore, and Carlyle too sentimental. You throw the book

aside and call the author names. Then you "shoo" the cat out of the room and kick the door to after her. You think you will write your letters, but after sticking at "Dearest Auntie : I find I have five minutes to spare, and so hasten to write to you," for a quarter of an hour, without being able to think of another sentence, you tumble the paper into the desk, fling the wet pen down upon the table-cloth, and start up with the resolution of going to see the Thompsons. While pulling on your gloves, however, it occurs to you that the Thompsons are idiots ; that they never have supper ; and that you will be expected to jump the baby. You curse the Thompsons and decide not to go.

By this time you feel completely crushed. You bury your face in your hands and think you would like to die and go to heaven. You picture to yourself your own sick-bed, with all your friends and relations standing round you weeping. You bless them all, especially the young and pretty ones. They will value you when you are gone, so you say to yourself, and learn too late what they have lost ; and you bitterly contrast their presumed regard for you then with their decided want of veneration now.

These reflections make you feel a little more cheerful, but only for a brief period ; for the next moment you think what a fool you must be to imagine for an instant that anybody would be sorry at anything that might happen to you. Who would care two straws (whatever precise amount of care

two straws may represent) whether you are blown up, or hung up, or married, or drowned? Nobody cares for you. You never have been properly appreciated, never met with your due deserts in any one particular. You review the whole of your past life, and it is painfully apparent that you have been ill-used from your cradle.

Half an hour's indulgence in these considerations works you up into a state of savage fury against everybody and everything, especially yourself, whom anatomical reasons alone prevent your kicking. Bed-time at last comes, to save you from doing something rash, and you spring upstairs, throw off your clothes, leaving them strewn all over the room, blow out the candle, and jump into bed as if you had backed yourself for a heavy wager to do the whole thing against time. There you toss and tumble about for a couple of hours or so, varying the monotony by occasionally jerking the clothes off and getting out and putting them on again. At length you drop into an uneasy and fitful slumber, have bad dreams, and wake up late the next morning.

At least, this is all we poor single men can do under the circumstances. Married men bully their wives, grumble at the dinner, and insist on the children's going to bed. All of which, creating, as it does, a good deal of disturbance in the house, must be a great relief to the feelings of a man in the blues, rows being the only form of amusement in which he can take any interest.

The symptoms of the infirmity are much the same in every case, but the affliction itself is variously termed. The poet says that "a feeling of sadness comes o'er him." 'Arry refers to the heavings of his wayward heart by confiding to Jimmie that he has "got the blooming hump." Your sister doesn't know what is the matter with her to-night. She feels out of sorts altogether and hopes nothing is going to happen. The every-day young man is "so awful glad to meet you, old fellow," for he does "feel so jolly miserable this evening." As for myself, I generally say that "I have a strange, unsettled feeling to-night" and "think I'll go out."

By the way, it never does come except in the evening. In the sun-time, when the world is bounding forward full of life, we cannot stay to sigh and sulk. The roar of the working day drowns the voices of the elfin sprites that are ever singing their low-toned *miserère* in our ears. In the day we are angry, disappointed, or indignant, but never "in the blues" and never melancholy. When things go wrong at ten o'clock in the morning we—or rather you—swear and knock the furniture about; but if the misfortune comes at ten P.M., we read poetry or sit in the dark and think what a hollow world this is.

But, as a rule, it is not trouble that makes us melancholy. The actuality is too stern a thing for sentiment. We linger to weep over a picture, but from the original we should quickly turn our eyes away. There is no pathos in real misery: no

luxury in real grief. We do not toy with sharp swords nor hug a gnawing fox to our breast for choice. When a man or woman loves to brood over a sorrow and takes care to keep it green in their memory, you may be sure it is no longer a pain to them. However they may have suffered from it at first, the recollection has become by then a pleasure. Many dear old ladies who daily look at tiny shoes lying in lavender-scented drawers, and weep as they think of the tiny feet whose toddling march is done, and sweet-faced young ones who place each night beneath their pillow some lock that once curled on a boyish head that the salt waves have kissed to death, will call me a nasty cynical brute and say I'm talking nonsense; but I believe, nevertheless, that if they will ask themselves truthfully whether they find it unpleasant to dwell thus on their sorrow, they will be compelled to answer "No." Tears are as sweet as laughter to some natures. The proverbial Englishman, we know from old chronicler Froissart, takes his pleasures sadly, and the Englishwoman goes a step further and takes her pleasures in sadness itself.

I am not sneering. I would not for a moment sneer at anything that helps to keep hearts tender in this hard old world. We men are cold and common-sensed enough for all; we would not have women the same. No, no, ladies dear, be always sentimental and soft-hearted, as you are—be the soothing butter to our coarse dry bread. Besides, sentiment is to women what fun is to us. They

do not care for our humor, surely it would be unfair to deny them their grief. And who shall say that their mode of enjoyment is not as sensible as ours? Why assume that a doubled-up body, a contorted, purple face, and a gaping mouth emitting a series of ear-splitting shrieks point to a state of more intelligent happiness than a pensive face reposing upon a little white hand, and a pair of gentle tear-dimmed eyes looking back through Time's dark avenue upon a fading past?

I am glad when I see Regret walked with as a friend—glad because I know the saltiness has been washed from out the tears, and that the sting must have been plucked from the beautiful face of Sorrow ere we dare press her pale lips to ours. Time has laid his healing hand upon the wound when we can look back upon the pain we once fainted under and no bitterness or despair rises in our hearts. The burden is no longer heavy when we have for our past troubles only the same sweet mingling of pleasure and pity that we feel when old knight-hearted Colonel Newcome answers "*adsum*" to the great roll-call, or when Tom and Maggie Tulliver, clasping hands through the mists that have divided them, go down, locked in each other's arms, beneath the swollen waters of the Floss.

Talking of poor Tom and Maggie Tulliver brings to my mind a saying of George Eliot's in connection with this subject of melancholy. She speaks somewhere of the "sadness of a summer's evening."

How wonderfully true—like everything that came from that wonderful pen—the observation is! Who has not felt the sorrowful enchantment of those lingering sunsets? The world belongs to Melancholy then, a thoughtful deep-eyed maiden who loves not the glare of day. It is not till “light thickens and the crow wings to the rocky wood” that she steals forth from her groves. Her palace is in twilight land. It is there she meets us. At her shadowy gate she takes our hand in hers and walks beside us through her mystic realm. We see no form, but seem to hear the rustling of her wings.

Even in the toiling hum-drum city her spirit comes to us. There is a somber presence in each long, dull street; and the dark river creeps ghost-like under the black arches, as if bearing some hidden secret beneath its muddy waves.

In the silent country, when the trees and hedges loom dim and blurred against the rising night, and the bat’s wing flutters in our face, and the land-rail’s cry sounds drearily across the fields, the spell sinks deeper still into our hearts. We seem in that hour to be standing by some unseen death-bed, and in the swaying of the elms we hear the sigh of the dying day.

A solemn sadness reigns. A great peace is around us. In its light our cares of the working day grow small and trivial, and bread and cheese—ay, and even kisses—do not seem the only things worth striving for. Thoughts we cannot speak but

only listen to flood in upon us, and standing in the stillness under earth's darkening dome, we feel that we are greater than our petty lives. Hung round with those dusky curtains, the world is no longer a mere dingy workshop, but a stately temple wherein man may worship, and where at times in the dimness his groping hands touch God's.

ON BEING HARD UP.

It is a most remarkable thing. I sat down with the full intention of writing something clever and original; but for the life of me I can't think of anything clever and original—at least, not at this moment. The only thing I can think about now is being hard up. I suppose having my hands in my pockets has made me think about this. I always do sit with my hands in my pockets except when I am in the company of my sisters, my cousins, or my aunts; and they kick up such a shindy—I should say expostulate so eloquently upon the subject—that I have to give in and take them out—my hands I mean. The chorus to their objections is that it is not gentlemanly. I am hanged if I can see why. I could understand its not being considered gentlemanly to put your hands in other people's pockets (especially by the other people), but how, O ye sticklers for what looks this and what looks that, can putting his hands in his own pockets make a man less gentle? Perhaps you are right, though. Now I come to think of it, I have heard some people grumble most savagely when doing it. But they were mostly old gentlemen. We young fel-

lows, as a rule, are never quite at ease unless we have our hands in our pockets. We are awkward and shifty. We are like what a music-hall Lion Comique would be without his opera-hat, if such a thing can be imagined. But let us put our hands in our trousers pockets, and let there be some small change in the right-hand one and a bunch of keys in the left, and we will face a female post-office clerk.

It is a little difficult to know what to do with your hands, even in your pockets, when there is nothing else there. Years ago, when my whole capital would occasionally come down to "what in town the people call a bob," I would recklessly spend a penny of it, merely for the sake of having the change, all in coppers, to jingle. You don't feel nearly so hard up with eleven pence in your pocket as you do with a shilling. Had I been "La-di-da," that impecunious youth about whom we superior folk are so sarcastic, I would have changed my penny for two ha'pennies.

I can speak with authority on the subject of being hard up. I have been a provincial actor. If further evidence be required, which I do not think likely, I can add that I have been a "gentleman connected with the press." I have lived on 15 shilling a week. I have lived a week on 10, owing the other 5; and I have lived for a fortnight on a great-coat.

It is wonderful what an insight into domestic economy being really hard up gives one. If you want to find out the value of money, live on 15

shillings a week and see how much you can put by for clothes and recreation. You will find out that it is worth while to wait for the farthing change, that it is worth while to walk a mile to save a penny, that a glass of beer is a luxury to be indulged in only at rare intervals, and that a collar can be worn for four days.

Try it just before you get married. It will be excellent practice. Let your son and heir try it before sending him to college. He won't grumble at a hundred a year pocket-money then. There are some people to whom it would do a world of good. There is that delicate blossom who can't drink any claret under ninety-four, and who would as soon think of dining off cat's meat as off plain roast mutton. You do come across these poor wretches now and then, though, to the credit of humanity, they are principally confined to that fearful and wonderful society known only to lady novelists. I never hear of one of these creatures discussing a *menu* card but I feel a mad desire to drag him off to the bar of some common east-end public-house and cram a sixpenny dinner down his throat—beef-steak pudding, fourpence; potatoes, a penny; half a pint of porter, a penny. The recollection of it (and the mingled fragrance of beer, tobacco, and roast pork generally leaves a vivid impression) might induce him to turn up his nose a little less frequently in the future at everything that is put before him. Then there is that generous party, the cadger's delight, who is so free with his small change, but who

never thinks of paying his debts. It might teach even him a little common sense. "I always give the waiter a shilling. One can't give the fellow less, you know," explained a young government clerk with whom I was lunching the other day in Regent Street. I agreed with him as to the utter impossibility of making it elevenpence ha'penny but at the same time I resolved to one day decoy him to an eating-house I remembered near Covent Garden, where the waiter, for the better discharge of his duties, goes about in his shirt-sleeves—and very dirty sleeves they are, too, when it gets near the end of the month. I know that waiter. If my friend gives him anything beyond a penny, the man will insist on shaking hands with him then and there as a mark of his esteem ; of that I feel sure.

There have been a good many funny things said and written about hardupishness, but the reality is not funny, for all that. It is not funny to have to haggle over pennies. It isn't funny to be thought mean and stingy. It isn't funny to be shabby and to be ashamed of your address. No, there is nothing at all funny in poverty—to the poor. It is hell upon earth to a sensitive man ; and many a brave gentleman who would have faced the labors of Hercules has had his heart broken by its petty miseries.

It is not the actual discomforts themselves that are hard to bear. Who would mind roughing it a bit if that were all it meant ? What cared Robinson Crusoe for a patch on his trousers ? Did he wear trousers ? I forget : or did he go about as he

does in the pantomimes? What did it matter to him if his toes did stick out of his boots? and what if his umbrella was a cotton one, so long as it kept the rain off? His shabbiness did not trouble him; there was none of his friends round about to sneer him.

Being poor is a mere trifle. It is being known to be poor that is the sting. It is not cold that makes a man without a great-coat hurry along so quickly. It is not all shame at telling lies—which he knows will not be believed—that makes him turn so red when he informs you that he considers great-coats unhealthy and never carries an umbrella on principle. It is easy enough to say that poverty is no crime. No; if it were men wouldn't be ashamed of it. It's a blunder, though, and is punished as such. A poor man is despised the whole world over; despised as much by a Christian as by a lord, as much by a demagogue as by a footman, and not all the copy-book maxims ever set for ink stained youth will make him respected. Appearances are everything, so far as human opinion goes, and the man who will walk down Piccadilly arm in arm with the most notorious scamp in London, provided he is a well-dressed one, will slink up a back street to say a couple of words to a seedy-looking gentleman. And the seedy-looking gentleman knows this—no one better—and will go a mile round to avoid meeting an acquaintance. Those that knew him in his prosperity need never trouble themselves to look the other way. He is a thousand times more anxious

that they should not see him than they can be ; and as to their assistance, there is nothing he dreads more than the offer of it. All he wants is to be forgotten ; and in this respect he is generally fortunate enough to get what he wants.

One becomes used to being hard up, as one becomes used to everything else, by the help of that wonderful old homeopathic doctor, Time. You can tell at a glance the difference between the old hand and the novice ; between the case-hardened man who has been used to shift and struggle for years and the poor devil of a beginner striving to hide his misery, and in a constant agony of fear lest he should be found out. Nothing shows this difference more clearly than the way in which each will pawn his watch. As the poet says somewhere : " True ease in pawning comes from art, not chance." The one goes into his " uncle's " with as much composure as he would into his tailor's—very likely with more. The assistant is even civil and attends to him at once, to the great indignation of the lady in the next box, who, however, sarcastically observes that she don't mind being kept waiting " if it is a regular customer." Why, from the pleasant and business-like manner in which the transaction is carried out, it might be a large purchase in the three per cents. Yet what a piece of work a man makes of his first " pop." A boy popping his first question is confidence itself compared with him. He hangs about outside the shop until he has succeeded in attracting the attention of all the loafers in the neighbor-

hood and has aroused strong suspicions in the mind of the policeman on the beat. At last, after a careful examination of the contents of the windows, made for the purpose of impressing the by-standers with the notion that he is going in to purchase a diamond bracelet or some such trifle, he enters, trying to do so with a careless swagger, and giving himself really the air of a member of the swell mob. When inside he speaks in so low a voice as to be perfectly inaudible, and has to say it all over again. When, in the course of his rambling conversation about a "friend" of his, the word "lend" is reached, he is promptly told to go up the court on the right and take the first door round the corner. He comes out of the shop with a face that you could easily light a cigarette at, and firmly under the impression that the whole population of the district is watching him. When he does get to the right place he has forgotten his name and address and is in a general condition of hopeless imbecility. Asked in a severe tone how he came by "this," he stammers and contradicts himself, and it is only a miracle if he does not confess to having stolen it that very day. He is thereupon informed that they don't want anything to do with his sort, and that he had better get out of this as quickly as possible, which he does, recollecting nothing more until he finds himself three miles off, without the slightest knowledge how he got there.

By the way, how awkward it is, though, having to depend on public-houses and churches for the

time. The former are generally too fast and the latter too slow. Besides which, your efforts to get a glimpse of the public-house clock from the outside are attended with great difficulties. If you gently push the swing-door ajar and peer in you draw upon yourself the contemptuous looks of the barmaid, who at once puts you down in the same category with area sneaks and cadgers. You also create a certain amount of agitation among the married portion of the customers. You don't see the clock because it is behind the door; and in trying to withdraw quietly you jam your head. The only other method is to jump up and down outside the window. After this latter proceeding, however, if you do not bring out a banjo and commence to sing, the youthful inhabitants of the neighborhood, who have gathered round in expectation, become disappointed.

I should like to know, too, by what mysterious law of nature it is that before you have left your watch "to be repaired" half an hour, some one is sure to stop you in the street and conspicuously ask you the time. Nobody even feels the slightest curiosity on the subject when you've got it on.

Dear old ladies and gentlemen who know nothing about being hard up—and may they never, bless their gray old heads—look upon the pawn-shop as the last stage of degradation; but those who know it better (and my readers have, no doubt, noticed this themselves) are often surprised, like the little boy who dreamed he went to heaven, at meeting so

many people there that they never expected to see. For my part, I think it a much more independent course than borrowing from friends, and I always try to impress this upon those of my acquaintance who incline toward "wanting a couple of pounds till the day after to-morrow." But they won't all see it. One of them once remarked that he objected to the principle of the thing. I fancy if he had said it was the interest that he objected to he would have been nearer the truth: twenty-five per cent. certainly does come heavy.

There are degrees in being hard up. We are all hard up, more or less—most of us more. Some are hard up for a thousand pounds; some for a shilling. Just at this moment I am hard up myself for a fiver. I only want it for a day or two. I should be certain of paying it back within a week at the outside, and if any lady or gentleman among my readers would kindly lend it me, I should be very much obliged indeed. They could send it to me under cover to Messrs. Field & Tuer, only, in such case, please let the envelope be carefully sealed. I would give you my I.O.U. as security.

ON VANITY AND VANITIES.

ALL is vanity and everybody's vain. Women are terribly vain. So are men—more so, if possible. So are children, particularly children. One of them at this very moment is hammering upon my legs. She wants to know what I think of her new shoes. Candidly I don't think much of them. They lack symmetry and curve and possess an indescribable appearance of lumpiness (I believe, too, they've put them on the wrong feet). But I don't say this. It is not criticism, but flattery that she wants; and I gush over them with what I feel to myself to be degrading effusiveness. Nothing else would satisfy this self-opinionated cherub. I tried the conscientious-friend dodge with her on one occasion, but it was not a success. She had requested my judgment upon her general conduct and behavior, the exact case submitted being, "Wot oo tink of me? Oo peased wi' me?" and I had thought it a good opportunity to make a few salutary remarks upon her late moral career, and said: "No, I am not pleased with you." I recalled to her mind the events of that very morning, and I put it to her how she, as a Christian child, could expect a wise and good uncle to be satisfied with the carryings on

of an infant who that very day had roused the whole house at five A.M.; had upset a water-jug and tumbled downstairs after it at seven; had endeavored to put the cat in the bath at eight; and sat on her own father's hat at nine thirty-five.

What did she do? Was she grateful to me for my plain speaking? Did she ponder upon my words and determine to profit by them and to lead from that hour a better and nobler life?

No! she howled.

That done, she became abusive. She said:

"Oo naughty—oo naughty, bad unkie—oo bad man—me tell MAR."

And she did, too.

Since then, when my views have been called for I have kept my real sentiments more to myself like, preferring to express unbounded admiration of this young person's actions, irrespective of their actual merits. And she nods her head approvingly and trots off to advertise my opinion to the rest of the household. She appears to employ it as a sort of testimonial for mercenary purposes, for I subsequently hear distant sounds of "Unkie says me dood dirl—me dot to have two bikkies [biscuits]."

There she goes, now, gazing rapturously at her own toes and murmuring "pittie"—two-foot-ten of conceit and vanity, to say nothing of other wickednesses.

They are all alike. I remember sitting in a garden one sunny afternoon in the suburbs of London. Suddenly I heard a shrill treble voice calling

from a top-story window to some unseen being, presumably in one of the other gardens, "Gamma, me dood boy, me very good boy, gamma; me dot on Bob's knickiebockies."

Why, even animals are vain. I saw a great Newfoundland dog the other day sitting in front of a mirror at the entrance to a shop in Regent's Circus, and examining himself with an amount of smug satisfaction that I have never seen equaled elsewhere outside a vestry meeting.

I was at a farm-house once when some high holiday was being celebrated. I don't remember what the occasion was, but it was something festive, a May Day or Quarter Day, or something of that sort, and they put a garland of flowers round the head of one of the cows. Well, that absurd quadruped went about all day as perky as a school-girl in a new frock; and when they took the wreath off she became quite sulky, and they had to put it on again before she would stand still to be milked. This is not a Percy anecdote. It is plain, sober truth.

As for cats, they nearly equal human beings for vanity. I have known a cat get up and walk out of the room on a remark derogatory to her species being made by a visitor, while a neatly turned compliment will set them purring for an hour.

I do like cats. They are so unconsciously amusing. There is such a comic dignity about them, such a "How dare you!" "Go away, don't touch me" sort of air. Now, there is nothing haughty about a

dog. They are "Hail, fellow, well met" with every Tom, Dick, or Harry that they come across. When I meet a dog of my acquaintance I slap his head, call him opprobrious epithets, and roll him over on his back; and there he lies, gaping at me, and doesn't mind it a bit.

Fancy carrying on like that with a cat! Why, she would never speak to you again as long as you lived. No, when you want to win the approbation of a cat you must mind what you are about and work your way carefully. If you don't know the cat, you had best begin by saying, "Poor pussy." After which add "did 'ums" in a tone of soothing sympathy. You don't know what you mean any more than the cat does, but the sentiment seems to imply a proper spirit on your part, and generally touches her feelings to such an extent that if you are of good manners and passable appearance she will stick her back up and rub her nose against you. Matters having reached this stage, you may venture to chuck her under the chin and tickle the side of her head, and the intelligent creature will then stick her claws into your legs; and all is friendship and affection, as so sweetly expressed in the beautiful lines—

"I love little pussy, her coat is so warm,
And if I don't tease her she'll do me no harm;
So I'll stroke her, and pat her, and feed her with food,
And pussy will love me because I am good."

The last two lines of the stanza give us a pretty

true insight into pussy's notions of human goodness. It is evident that in her opinion goodness consists of stroking her, and patting her, and feeding her with food. I fear this narrow-minded view of virtue, though, is not confined to pussies. We are all inclined to adopt a similar standard of merit in our estimate of other people. A good man is a man who is good to us, and a bad man is a man who doesn't do what we want him to. The truth is, we each of us have an inborn conviction that the whole world, with everybody and everything in it, was created as a sort of necessary appendage to ourselves. Our fellow men and women were made to admire us and to minister to our various requirements. You and I, dear reader, are each the center of the universe in our respective opinions. You, as I understand it, were brought into being by a considerate Providence in order that you might read and pay me for what I write while I, in your opinion, am an article sent into the world to write something for you to read. The stars—as we term the myriad other worlds that are rushing down beside us through the eternal silence—were put into the heavens to make the sky look interesting for us at night; and the moon with its dark mysteries and ever-hidden face is an arrangement for us to flirt under.

I fear we are most of us like Mrs. Poyser's bantam cock, who fancied the sun got up every morning to hear him crow. "'Tis vanity that makes the world go round." I don't believe any man ever existed without vanity, and if he did he would be an

extremely uncomfortable person to have anything to do with. He would, of course, be a very good man, and we should respect him very much. He would be a very admirable man—a man to be put under a glass case and shown round as a specimen—a man to be stuck upon a pedestal and copied, like a school exercise—a man to be revered, but not a man to be loved, not a human brother whose hand we should care to grip. Angels may be very excellent sort of folk in their way, but we, poor mortals, in our present state, would probably find them precious slow company. Even mere good people are rather depressing. It is in our faults and failings, not in our virtues, that we touch one another and find sympathy. We differ widely enough in our nobler qualities. It is in our follies that we are at one. Some of us are pious, some of us are generous. Some few of us are honest, comparatively speaking; and some, fewer still, may possibly be truthful. But in vanity and kindred weaknesses we can all join hands. Vanity is one of those touches of nature that make the whole world kin. From the Indian hunter, proud of his belt of scalps, to the European general, swelling beneath his row of stars and medals; from the Chinese, gleeful at the length of his pigtail, to the “professional beauty,” suffering tortures in order that her waist may resemble a peg-top; from draggle-tailed little Polly Stiggins, strutting through Seven Dials with a tattered parasol over her head, to the princess sweeping through a drawing-room with a train of four yards

long ; from 'Arry, winning by vulgar chaff the loud laughter of his pals, to the statesman whose ears are tickled by the cheers that greet his high-sounding periods ; from the dark-skinned African, bartering his rare oils and ivory for a few glass beads to hang about his neck, to the Christian maiden selling her white body for a score of tiny stones and an empty title to tack before her name—all march, and fight, and bleed, and die beneath its tawdry flag.

Ay, ay, vanity is truly the motive-power that moves humanity, and it is flattery that greases the wheels. If you want to win affection and respect in this world, you must flatter people. Flatter high and low, and rich and poor, and silly and wise. You will get on famously. Praise this man's virtues and that man's vices. Compliment everybody upon everything, and especially upon what they haven't got. Admire guys for their beauty, fools for their wit, and boors for their breeding. Your discernment and intelligence will be extolled to the skies.

Every one can be got over by flattery. The belted earl—"belted earl" is the correct phrase, I believe. I don't know what it means, unless it be an earl that wears a belt instead of braces. Some men do. I don't like it myself. You have to keep the thing so tight for it to be of any use, and that is uncomfortable. Anyhow, whatever particular kind of an earl a belted earl may be, he is, I assert, get-overable by flattery ; just as every other human being is, from a duchess to a cat's-meat man, from a plowboy to a poet—and the poet far easier than the

plowboy, for butter sinks better into wheaten bread than into oaten cakes.

As for love, flattery is its very life-blood. Fill a person with love for themselves, and what runs over will be your share, says a certain witty and truthful Frenchman whose name I can't for the life of me remember. (Confound it! I never can remember names when I want to.) Tell a girl she is an angel, only more angelic than an angel; that she is a goddess, only more graceful, queenly, and heavenly than the average goddess; that she is more fairy-like than Titania, more beautiful than Venus, more enchanting than Parthenopë; more adorable, lovely, and radiant, in short, than any other woman that ever did live, does live, or could live, and you will make a very favorable impression upon her trusting little heart. Sweet innocent! she will believe every word you say. It is so easy to deceive a woman—in this way.

Dear little souls, they hate flattery, so they tell you; and when you say, "Ah, darling, it isn't flattery in your case, it's plain, sober truth; you really are, without exaggeration, the most beautiful, the most good, the most charming, the most divine, the most perfect human creature that ever trod this earth," they will smile a quiet, approving smile, and, leaning against your manly shoulder, murmur that you are a dear good fellow after all.

By Jove! fancy a man trying to make love on strictly truthful principles, determining never to utter a word of mere compliment or hyperbole, but

to scrupulously confine himself to exact fact! Fancy his gazing rapturously into his mistress' eyes and whispering softly to her that she wasn't, on the whole, bad-looking, as girls went! Fancy his holding up her little hand and assuring her that it was of a light drab color shot with red; and telling her as he pressed her to his heart that her nose, for a turned-up one, seemed rather pretty; and that her eyes appeared to him, as far as he could judge, to be quite up to the average standard of such things!

A nice chance he would stand against the man who would tell her that her face was like a fresh blush rose, that her hair was a wandering sunbeam imprisoned by her smiles, and her eyes like two evening stars.

There are various ways of flattering, and, of course, you must adapt your style to your subject. Some people like it laid on with a trowel, and this requires very little art. With sensible persons, however, it needs to be done very delicately, and more by suggestion than actual words. A good many like it wrapped up in the form of an insult, as—"Oh, you are a perfect fool, you are. You would give your last sixpence to the first hungry-looking beggar you met;" while others will swallow it only when administered through the medium of a third person, so that if C wishes to get at an A of this sort, he must confide to A's particular friend B that he thinks A a splendid fellow, and beg him, B, not to mention it, especially to A. Be careful that B is a reliable man, though, otherwise he won't.

Those fine, sturdy John Bulls who "hate flattery, sir," "Never let anybody get over me by flattery," etc., etc., are very simply managed. Flatter them enough upon their absence of vanity, and you can do what you like with them.

After all, vanity is as much a virtue as a vice. It is easy to recite copy-book maxims against its sinfulness, but it is a passion that can move us to good as well as to evil. Ambition is only vanity ennobled. We want to win praise and admiration—or fame as we prefer to name it—and so we write great books, and paint grand pictures, and sing sweet songs; and toil with willing hands in study, loom, and laboratory.

We wish to become rich men, not in order to enjoy ease and comfort—all that any one man can taste of those may be purchased anywhere for £200 per annum—but that our houses may be bigger and more gaudily furnished than our neighbors'; that our horses and servants may be more numerous; that we may dress our wives and daughters in absurd but expensive clothes; and that we may give costly dinners of which we ourselves individually do not eat a shilling's worth. And to do this we aid the world's work with clear and busy brain, spreading commerce among its peoples, carrying civilization to its remotest corners.

Do not let us abuse vanity, therefore. Rather let us use it. Honor itself is but the highest form of vanity. The instinct is not confined solely to Beau Brummels and Dolly Vardens. There is the

vanity of the peacock and the vanity of the eagle. Snobs are vain. But so, too, are heroes. Come, oh! my young brother bucks, let us be vain together. Let us join hands and help each other to increase our vanity. Let us be vain, not of our trousers and hair, but of brave hearts and working hands, of truth, of purity, of nobility. Let us be too vain to stoop to aught that is mean or base, too vain for petty selfishness and little-minded envy, too vain to say an unkind word or do an unkind act. Let us be vain of being single-hearted, upright gentlemen in the midst of a world of knaves. Let us pride ourselves upon thinking high thoughts, achieving great deeds, living good lives.

ON GETTING ON IN THE WORLD.

Nor exactly the sort of thing for an idle fellow to think about, is it? But outsiders, you know, often see most of the game; and sitting in my arbor by the wayside, smoking my hookah of contentment and eating the sweet lotus-leaves of indolence, I can look out musingly upon the whirling throng that rolls and tumbles past me on the great high-road of life.

Never-ending is the wild procession. Day and night you can hear the quick tramp of the myriad feet—some running, some walking, some halting and lame; but all hastening, all eager in the feverish race, all straining life and limb and heart and soul to reach the ever-receding horizon of success.

Mark them as they surge along—men and women, old and young, gentle and simple, fair and foul, rich and poor, merry and sad—all hurrying, bustling, scrambling. The strong pushing aside the weak, the cunning creeping past the foolish; those behind elbowing those before; those in front kicking, as they run, at those behind. Look close and see the flitting show. Here is an old man panting for breath, and there a timid maiden driven by a hard and sharp-faced matron; here is a studious youth,

reading "How to Get On in the World" and letting everybody pass him as he stumbles along with his eyes on his book; here is a bored-looking man, with a fashionably dressed woman jogging his elbow; here a boy gazing wistfully back at the sunny village that he never again will see; here, with a firm and easy step, strides a broad-shouldered man; and here, with stealthy tread, a thin-faced, stooping fellow dodges and shuffles upon his way; here, with gaze fixed always on the ground, an artful rogue carefully works his way from side to side of the road and thinks he is going forward; and here a youth with a noble face stands, hesitating as he looks from the distant goal to the mud beneath his feet.

And now into sight comes a fair girl, with her dainty face growing more wrinkled at every step, and now a care-worn man, and now a hopeful lad.

A motley throng—a motley throng! Prince and beggar, sinner and saint, butcher and baker and candlestick maker, tinkers and tailors, and plowboys and sailors—all jostling along together. Here the counsel in his wig and gown, and here the old Jew clothes-man under his dingy tiara; here the soldier in his scarlet, and here the undertaker's mute in streaming hat-band and worn cotton gloves; here the musty scholar fumbling his faded leaves, and here the scented actor dangling his showy seals. Here the glib politician crying his legislative panaceas, and here the peripatetic Cheap-Jack holding aloft his quack cures for human ills. Here the sleek

capitalist and there the sinewy laborer; here the man of science and here the shoe-back; here the poet and here the water-rate collector; here the cabinet minister and there the ballet-dancer. Here a red-nosed publican shouting the praises of his vats and there a temperance lecturer at £50 a night; here a judge and there a swindler; here a priest and there a gambler. Here a jeweled duchess, smiling and gracious; here a thin lodging-house keeper, irritable with cooking; and here a wabbling, strutting thing, tawdry in paint and finery.

Cheek by cheek they struggle onward. Screaming, cursing, and praying, laughing, singing, and moaning, they rush past side by side. Their speed never slackens, the race never ends. There is no wayside rest for them, no halt by cooling fountains, no pause beneath green shades. On, on, on—on through the heat and the crowd and the dust—on, or they will be trampled down and lost—on, with throbbing brain and tottering limbs—on, till the heart grows sick, and the eyes grow blurred, and a gurgling groan tells those behind they may close up another space.

And yet, in spite of the killing pace and the stony track, who but the sluggard or the dolt can hold aloof from the course? Who—like the belated traveler that stands watching fairy revels till he snatches and drains the goblin cup and springs into the whirling circle—can view the mad tumult and not be drawn into its midst? Not I for one. I

confess to the wayside arbor, the pipe of contentment, and the lotus-leaves being altogether unsuitable metaphors. They sounded very nice and philosophical, but I'm afraid I am not the sort of person to sit in arbors smoking pipes when there is any fun going on outside. I think I more resemble the Irishman who, seeing a crowd collecting, sent his little girl out to ask if there was going to be a row—"Cos, if so, father would like to be in it."

I love the fierce strife. I like to watch it. I like to hear of people getting on in it—battling their way bravely and fairly—that is, not slipping through by luck or trickery. It stirs one's old Saxon fighting blood like the tales of "knights who fought 'gainst fearful odds" that thrilled us in our school-boy days.

And fighting the battle of life is fighting against fearful odds, too. There are giants and dragons in this nineteenth century, and the golden casket that they guard is not so easy to win as it appears in the story-books. There, Algernon takes one long, last look at the ancestral hall, dashes the tear-drop from his eye, and goes off—to return in three years' time, rolling in riches. The authors do not tell us "how it's done," which is a pity, for it would surely prove exciting.

But then not one novelist in a thousand ever does tell us the real story of their hero. They linger for a dozen pages over a tea-party, but sum up a life's history with "he had become one of our merchant princes," or "he was now a great artist, with the

world at his feet." Why, there is more real life in one of Gilbert's patter-songs than in half the biographical novels ever written. He relates to us all the various steps by which his office-boy rose to be the "ruler of the queen's navee," and explains to us how the briefless barrister managed to become a great and good judge, "ready to try this breach of promise of marriage." It is in the petty details, not in the great results, that the interest of existence lies.

What we really want is a novel showing us all the hidden under-current of an ambitious man's career—his struggles, and failures, and hopes, his disappointments and victories. It would be an immense success. I am sure the wooing of Fortune would prove quite as interesting a tale as the wooing of any flesh-and-blood maiden, though, by the way, it would read extremely similar; for Fortune is, indeed, as the ancients painted her, very like a woman—not quite so unreasonable and inconsistent, but nearly so—and the pursuit is much the same in one case as in the other. Ben Jonson's couplet—

"Court a mistress, she denies you;
Let her alone, she will court you"—

puts them both in a nutshell. A woman never thoroughly cares for her lover until he has ceased to care for her; and it is not until you have snapped your fingers in Fortune's face and turned on your heel that she begins to smile upon you.

But by that time you do not much care whether she smiles or frowns. Why could she not have smiled when her smiles would have filled you with ecstasy? Everything comes too late in this world.

Good people say that it is quite right and proper that it should be so, and that it proves ambition is wicked.

Bosh! Good people are altogether wrong. (They always are, in my opinion. We never agree on any single point.) What would the world do without ambitious people, I should like to know? Why, it would be as flabby as a Norfolk dumpling. Ambitious people are the leaven which raises it into wholesome bread. Without ambitious people the world would never get up. They are busybodies who are about early in the morning, hammering, shouting, and rattling the fire-irons, and rendering it generally impossible for the rest of the house to remain in bed.

Wrong to be ambitious, forsooth! The men wrong who, with bent back and sweating brow, cut the smooth road over which humanity marches forward from generation to generation! Men wrong for using the talents that their Master has intrusted to them—for toiling while others play!

Of course they are seeking their reward. Man is not given that god-like unselfishness that thinks only of others' good. But in working for themselves they are working for us all. We are so bound together that no man can labor for himself alone. Each blow he strikes in his own behalf helps to

mold the universe. The stream in struggling onward turns the mill-wheel; the coral insect, fashioning its tiny cell, joins continents to one another; and the ambitious man, building a pedestal for himself, leaves a monument to posterity. Alexander and Caesar fought for their own ends, but in doing so they put a belt of civilization half round the earth. Stephenson, to win a fortune, invented the steam-engine; and Shakespeare wrote his plays in order to keep a comfortable home for Mrs. Shakespeare and the little Shakespeares.

Contented, unambitious people are all very well in their way. They form a neat, useful background for great portraits to be painted against, and they make a respectable, if not particularly intelligent, audience for the active spirits of the age to play before. I have not a word to say against contented people so long as they keep quiet. But do not, for goodness' sake, let them go strutting about, as they are so fond of doing, crying out that they are the true models for the whole species. Why, they are the deadheads, the drones in the great hive, the street crowds that lounge about, gaping at those who are working.

And let them not imagine, either—as they are also fond of doing—that they are very wise and philosophical and that it is a very artful thing to be contented. It may be true that “a contented mind is happy anywhere,” but so is a Jerusalem pony, and the consequence is that both are put anywhere and are treated anyhow. “Oh, you need not bother

about him," is what is said ; " he is very contented as he is, and it would be a pity to disturb him." And so your contented party is passed over and the discontented man gets his place.

If you are foolish enough to be contented, don't show it, but grumble with the rest ; and if you can do with a little, ask for a great deal. Because if you don't you won't get any. In this world it is necessary to adopt the principle pursued by the plaintiff in an action for damages, and to demand ten times more than you are ready to accept. If you can feel satisfied with a hundred, begin by insisting on a thousand ; if you start by suggesting a hundred you will only get ten.

It was by not following this simple plan that poor Jean Jacques Rousseau came to such grief. He fixed the summit of his earthly bliss at living in an orchard with an amiable woman and a cow, and he never attained even that. He did get as far as the orchard, but the woman was not amiable, and she brought her mother with her, and there was no cow. Now, if he had made up his mind for a large country estate, a houseful of angels, and a cattle-show, he might have lived to possess his kitchen garden and one head of live-stock, and even possibly have come across that *rara-avis*—a really amiable woman.

What a terribly dull affair, too, life must be for contented people ! How heavy the time must hang upon their hands, and what on earth do they occupy their thoughts with, supposing that they have any ? Reading the paper and smoking seems to be the in-

tellectual food of the majority of them, to which the more energetic add playing the flute and talking about the affairs of the next-door neighbor.

They never knew the excitement of expectation nor the stern delight of accomplished effort, such as stir the pulse of the man who has objects, and hopes, and plans. To the ambitious man life is a brilliant game—a game that calls forth all his tact and energy and nerve—a game to be won, in the long run, by the quick eye and the steady hand, and yet having sufficient chance about its working out to give it all the glorious zest of uncertainty. He exults in it as the strong swimmer in the heaving billows, as the athlete in the wrestle, the soldier in the battle.

And if he be defeated he wins the grim joy of fighting; if he lose the race, he, at least, has had a run. Better to work and fail than to sleep one's life away.

So, walk up, walk up, walk up. Walk up, ladies and gentlemen! walk up, boys and girls! Show your skill and try your strength; brave your luck and prove your pluck. Walk up! The show is never closed and the game is always going. The only genuine sport in all the fair, gentlemen—highly respectable and strictly moral—patronized by the nobility, clergy, and gentry. Established in the year one, gentlemen, and been flourishing ever since—walk up! Walk up, ladies and gentlemen, and take a hand. There are prizes for all and all can play. There is gold for the man and fame for the

boy ; rank for the maiden and pleasure for the fool.
So walk up, ladies and gentlemen, walk up!—all
prizes and no blanks ; for some few win, and as to
the rest, why—

“The rapture of pursuing
Is the prize the vanquished gain.”

ON THE WEATHER.

THINGS do go so contrary-like with me. I wanted to hit upon an especially novel, out-of-the-way subject for one of these articles. "I will write one paper about something altogether new," I said to myself; "something that nobody else has ever written or talked about before; and then I can have it all my own way." And I went about for days, trying to think of something of this kind; and I couldn't. And Mrs. Cutting, our charwoman, came yesterday—I don't mind mentioning her name, because I know she will not see this book. She would not look at such a frivolous publication. She never reads anything but the Bible and *Lloyd's Weekly News*. All other literature she considers unnecessary and sinful.

She said: "Lor', sir, you do look worried."

I said: "Mrs. Cutting, I am trying to think of a subject the discussion of which will come upon the world in the nature of a startler—some subject upon which no previous human being has ever said a word—some subject that will attract by its novelty, invigorate by its surprising freshness."

She laughed and said I was a funny gentleman.

That's my luck again. When I make serious observations people chuckle; when I attempt a joke nobody sees it. I had a beautiful one last week. I thought it so good, and I worked it up and brought it in artfully at a dinner-party. I forget how exactly, but we had been talking about the attitude of Shakespeare toward the Reformation, and I said something and immediately added, "Ah, that reminds me; such a funny thing happened the other day in Whitechapel." "Oh," said they, "what was that?" "Oh, 'twas awfully funny," I replied, beginning to giggle myself; "it will make you roar;" and I told it them.

There was dead silence when I finished—it was one of those long jokes, too—and then, at last, somebody said: "And that was the joke?"

I assured them that it was, and they were very polite and took my word for it. All but one old gentleman at the other end of the table, who wanted to know which was the joke—what he said to her or what she said to him; and we argued it out.

Some people are too much the other way. I knew a fellow once whose natural tendency to laugh at everything was so strong that if you wanted to talk seriously to him, you had to explain beforehand that what you were going to say would not be amusing. Unless you got him to clearly understand this, he would go off into fits of merriment over every word you uttered. I have known him on being asked the time stop short in the middle of the road, slap his leg, and burst into a roar of

laughter. One never dared say anything really funny to that man. A good joke would have killed him on the spot.

In the present instance I vehemently repudiated the accusation of frivolity, and pressed Mrs. Cutting for practical ideas. She then became thoughtful and hazarded "samplers;" saying that she never heard them spoken much of now, but that they used to be all the rage when she was a girl.

I declined samplers and begged her to think again. She pondered a long while, with a tea-tray in her hands, and at last suggested the weather, which she was sure had been most trying of late.

And ever since that idiotic suggestion I have been unable to get the weather out of my thoughts or anything else in.

It certainly is most wretched weather. At all events it is so now at the time I am writing, and if it isn't particularly unpleasant when I come to be read it soon will be.

It always is wretched weather according to us. The weather is like the government—always in the wrong. In summer-time we say it is stifling; in winter that it is killing; in spring and autumn we find fault with it for being neither one thing nor the other and wish it would make up its mind. If it is fine we say the country is being ruined for want of rain; if it does rain we pray for fine weather. If December passes without snow, we indignantly demand to know what has become of our good old-fashioned winters, and talk as if we had been cheat-

ed out of something we had bought and paid for; and when it does snow, our language is a disgrace to a Christian nation. We shall never be content until each man makes his own weather and keeps it to himself.

If that cannot be arranged, we would rather do without it altogether.

Yet I think it is only to us in cities that all weather is so unwelcome. In her own home, the country, Nature is sweet in all her moods. What can be more beautiful than the snow, falling big with mystery in silent softness, decking the fields and trees with white as if for a fairy wedding! And how delightful is a walk when the frozen ground rings beneath our swinging tread—when our blood tingles in the rare keen air, and the sheep-dogs' distant bark and children's laughter peals faintly clear like Alpine bells across the open hills! And then skating! scudding with wings of steel across the swaying ice, making whirring music as we fly. And oh, how dainty is spring—Nature at sweet eighteen! When the little hopeful leaves peep out so fresh and green, so pure and bright, like young lives pushing shyly out into the bustling world; when the fruit-tree blossoms, pink and white, like village maidens in their Sunday frocks, hide each white-washed cottage in a cloud of fragile splendor; and the cuckoo's note upon the breeze is wafted through the woods! And summer, with its deep dark green and drowsy hum—when the rain-drops whisper solemn secrets to the listening leaves and the twilight

lingers in the lanes ! And autumn ! ah, how sadly fair, with its golden glow and the dying grandeur of its tinted woods—its blood-red sunsets and its ghostly evening mists, with its busy murmur of reapers, and its laden orchards, and the calling of the gleaners, and the festivals of praise !

The very rain, and sleet, and hail seem only Nature's useful servants when found doing their simple duties in the country ; and the East Wind himself is nothing worse than a boisterous friend when we meet him between the hedge-rows.

But in the city where the painted stucco blisters under the smoky sun, and the sooty rain brings slush and mud, and the snow lies piled in dirty heaps, and the chill blasts whistle down dingy streets and shriek round flaring gas lit corners, no face of Nature charms us. Weather in towns is like a skylark in a counting-house—out of place and in the way. Towns ought to be covered in, warmed by hot-water pipes, and lighted by electricity. The weather is a country lass and does not appear to advantage in town. We liked well enough to flirt with her in the hay-field, but she does not seem so fascinating when we meet her in Pall Mall. There is too much of her there. The frank, free laugh and hearty voice that sounded so pleasant in the dairy jars against the artificiality of town-bred life, and her ways become exceedingly trying.

Just lately she has been favoring us with almost incessant rain for about three weeks ; and I am a demned damp, moist, unpleasant body, as Mr. Mantalini puts it.

Our next-door neighbor comes out in the back garden every now and then and says it's doing the country a world of good—not his coming out into the back garden, but the weather. He doesn't understand anything about it, but ever since he started a cucumber-frame last summer he has regarded himself in the light of an agriculturist, and talks in this absurd way with the idea of impressing the rest of the terrace with the notion that he is a retired farmer. I can only hope that for this once he is correct, and that the weather really is doing good to something, because it is doing me a considerable amount of damage. It is spoiling both my clothes and my temper. The latter I can afford, as I have a good supply of it, but it wounds me to the quick to see my dear old hats and trousers sinking, prematurely worn and aged, beneath the cold world's blasts and snows.

There is my new spring suit, too. A beautiful suit it was, and now it is hanging up so bespattered with mud I can't bear to look at it.

That was Jim's fault, that was. I should never have gone out in it that night if it had not been for him. I was just trying it on when he came in. He threw up his arms with a wild yell the moment he caught sight of it, and exclaimed that he had "got 'em again!"

I said: "Does it fit all right behind?"

"Spiffin, old man," he replied. And then he wanted to know if I was coming out.

I said "no" at first, but he overruled me. He

said that a man with a suit like that had no right to stop indoors. "Every citizen," said he, "owes a duty to the public. Each one should contribute to the general happiness as far as lies in his power. Come out and give the girls a treat."

Jim is slangy. I don't know where he picks it up. It certainly is not from me.

I said: "Do you think it will really please 'em?"

He said it would be like a day in the country to them.

That decided me. It was a lovely evening and I went.

When I got home I undressed and rubbed myself down with whisky, put my feet in hot water and a mustard-plaster on my chest, had a basin of gruel and a glass of hot brandy-and-water, tallowed my nose, and went to bed.

These prompt and vigorous measures, aided by a naturally strong constitution, were the means of preserving my life; but as for the suit! Well, there, it isn't a suit; it's a splash-board.

And I did fancy that suit, too. But that's just the way. I never do get particularly fond of anything in this world but what something dreadful happens to it. I had a tame rat when I was a boy, and I loved that animal as only a boy would love an old water-rat; and one day it fell into a large dish of gooseberry-fool that was standing to cool in the kitchen, and nobody knew what had become of the poor creature until the second helping.

I do hate wet weather in town. At least, it is

not so much the wet as the mud that I object to. Somehow or other I seem to possess an irresistible alluring power over mud. I have only to show myself in the street on a muddy day to be half-smothered by it. It all comes of being so attractive, as the old lady said when she was struck by lightning. Other people can go out on dirty days and walk about for hours without getting a speck upon themselves; while if I go across the road I come back a perfect disgrace to be seen (as in my boyish days my poor dear mother used often to tell me). If there were only one dab of mud to be found in the whole of London, I am convinced I should carry it off from all competitors.

I wish I could return the affection, but I fear I never shall be able to. I have a horror of what they call the "London particular." I feel miserable and muggy all through a dirty day, and it is quite a relief to pull one's clothes off and get into bed, out of the way of it all. Everything goes wrong in wet weather. I don't know how it is, but there always seem to me to be more people, and dogs, and perambulators, and cabs, and carts about in wet weather than at any other time, and they all get in your way more, and everybody is so disagreeable—except myself—and it does make me so wild. And then, too, somehow I always find myself carrying more things in wet weather than in dry; and when you have a bag, and three parcels, and a newspaper, and it suddenly comes on to rain, you can't open your umbrella.

Which reminds me of another phase of the weather that I can't bear, and that is April weather (so called because it always comes in May). Poets think it very nice. As it does not know its own mind five minutes together, they liken it to a woman; and it is supposed to be very charming on that account. I don't appreciate it, myself. Such lightning-change business may be all very agreeable in a girl. It is no doubt highly delightful to have to do with a person who grins one moment about nothing at all, and snivels the next for precisely the same cause, and who then giggles, and then sulks, and who is rude, and affectionate, and bad-tempered, and jolly, and boisterous, and silent, and passionate, and cold, and stand-offish, and flopping, all in one minute (mind, I don't say this. It is those poets. And they are supposed to be connoisseurs of this sort of thing); but in the weather the disadvantages of the system are more apparent. A woman's tears do not make one wet, but the rain does; and her coldness does not lay the foundations of asthma and rheumatism, as the east wind is apt to. I can prepare for and put up with a regularly bad day, but these ha'porth-of-all-sorts kind of days do not suit me. It aggravates me to see a bright blue sky above me when I am walking along wet through, and there is something so exasperating about the way the sun comes out smiling after a drenching shower, and seems to say: "Lord love you, you don't mean to say you're wet? Well, I am surprised. Why, it was only my fun."

They don't give you time to open or shut your umbrella in an English April, especially if it is an "automaton" one—the umbrella, I mean, not the April.

I bought an "automaton" once in April, and I did have a time with it! I wanted an umbrella, and I went into a shop in the Strand and told them so, and they said :

"Yes, sir. What sort of an umbrella would you like?"

I said I should like one that would keep the rain off, and that would not allow itself to be left behind in a railway carriage.

"Try an 'automaton,'" said the shopman.

"What's an 'automaton'?" said I.

"Oh, it's a beautiful arrangement," replied the man, with a touch of enthusiasm. "It opens and shuts itself."

I bought one and found that he was quite correct. It did open and shut itself. I had no control over it whatever. When it began to rain, which it did that season every alternate five minutes, I used to try and get the machine to open, but it would not budge; and then I used to stand and struggle with the wretched thing, and shake it, and swear at it, while the rain poured down in torrents. Then the moment the rain ceased the absurd thing would go up suddenly with a jerk and would not come down again; and I had to walk about under a bright blue sky, with an umbrella over my head, wishing that it would come on to rain again, so that it might not seem that I was insane.

When it did shut it did so unexpectedly and knocked one's hat off.

I don't know why it should be so, but it is an undeniable fact that there is nothing makes a man look so supremely ridiculous as losing his hat. The feeling of helpless misery that shoots down one's back on suddenly becoming aware that one's head is bare is among the most bitter ills that flesh is heir to. And then there is the wild chase after it, accompanied by an excitable small dog, who thinks it is a game, and in the course of which you are certain to upset three or four innocent children—to say nothing of their mothers—butt a fat old gentleman on to the top of a perambulator, and carom off a ladies' seminary into the arms of a wet sweep. After this, the idiotic hilarity of the spectators and the disreputable appearance of the hat when recovered appear but of minor importance.

Altogether, what between March winds, April showers, and the entire absence of May flowers, spring is not a success in cities. It is all very well in the country, as I have said, but in towns whose population is anything over ten thousand it most certainly ought to be abolished. In the world's grim workshops it is like the children—out of place. Neither shows to advantage amid the dust and din. It seems so sad to see the little dirt-grimed brats trying to play in the noisy courts and muddy streets. Poor little uncared-for, unwanted human atoms, they are not children. Children are bright-eyed, chubby, and shy. These are dingy, screeching elves,

their tiny faces seared and withered, their baby laughter cracked and hoarse.

The spring of life and the spring of the year were alike meant to be cradled in the green lap of nature. To us in the town spring brings but its cold winds and drizzling rains. We must seek it among the leafless woods and the brambly lanes, on the heathy moors and the great still hills, if we want to feel its joyous breath and hear its silent voices. There is a glorious freshness in the spring there. The scurrying clouds, the open bleakness, the rushing wind, and the clear bright air thrill one with vague energies and hopes. Life, like the landscape around us, seems bigger, and wider, and freer—a rainbow road leading to unknown ends. Through the silvery rents that bar the sky we seem to catch a glimpse of the great hope and grandeur that lies around this little throbbing world, and a breath of its scent is wafted us on the wings of the wild March wind.

Strange thoughts we do not understand are stirring in our hearts. Voices are calling us to some great effort, to some mighty work. But we do not comprehend their meaning yet, and the hidden echoes within us that would reply are struggling, inarticulate and dumb.

We stretch our hands like children to the light, seeking to grasp we know not what. Our thoughts, like the boys' thoughts in the Danish song, are very long, long thoughts, and very vague; we cannot see their end.

It must be so. All thoughts that peer outside this narrow world cannot be else than dim and shapeless. The thoughts that we can clearly grasp are very little thoughts—that two and two make four—that when we are hungry it is pleasant to eat—that honesty is the best policy ; all greater thoughts are undefined and vast to our poor childish brains. We see but dimly through the mists that roll around our time-girt isle of life, and only hear the distant surging of the great sea beyond.

ON CATS AND DOGS.

WHAT I've suffered from them this morning no tongue can tell. It began with Gustavus Adolphus. Gustavus Adolphus (they call him "Gusty" downstairs for short) is a very good sort of dog when he is in the middle of a large field or on a fairly extensive common, but I won't have him indoors. He means well, but this house is not his size. He stretches himself, and over go two chairs and a what-not. He wags his tail, and the room looks as if a devastating army had marched through it. He breathes, and it puts the fire out.

At dinner-time he creeps in under the table, lies there for awhile, and then gets up suddenly; the first intimation we have of his movements being given by the table, which appears animated by a desire to turn somersaults. We all clutch at it frantically and endeavor to maintain it in a horizontal position; whereupon his struggles, he being under the impression that some wicked conspiracy is being hatched against him, become fearful, and the final picture presented is generally that of an overturned table and a smashed-up dinner sandwiched between two sprawling layers of intimated men and women.

He came in this morning in his usual style, which he appears to have founded on that of an American cyclone, and the first thing he did was to sweep my coffee-cup off the table with his tail, sending the contents full into the middle of my waistcoat.

I rose from my chair hurriedly, and remarking "—," approached him at a rapid rate. He preceded me in the direction of the door. At the door he met Eliza coming in with eggs. Eliza observed "Ugh!" and sat down on the floor, the eggs took up different positions about the carpet, where they spread themselves out, and Gustavus Adolphus left the room. I called after him, strongly advising him to go straight downstairs and not let me see him again for the next hour or so; and he, seeming to agree with me, dodged the coal-scoop and went, while I returned, dried myself, and finished breakfast. I made sure that he had gone into the yard, but when I looked into the passage ten minutes later he was sitting at the top of the stairs. I ordered him down at once, but he only barked and jumped about, so I went to see what was the matter.

It was Tittums. She was sitting on the top stair but one and wouldn't let him pass.

Tittums is our kitten. She is about the size of a penny roll. Her back was up and she was swearing like a medical student.

She does swear fearfully. I do a little that way myself sometimes, but I am a mere amateur compared with her. To tell you the truth—mind, this is strictly between ourselves, please; I shouldn't like

your wife to know I said it—the women folk don't understand these things; but between you and me, you know, I think it does a man good to swear. Swearing is the safety-valve through which the bad temper that might otherwise do serious internal injury to his mental mechanism escapes in harmless vapping. When a man has said: "Bless you, my dear, sweet sir. What the sun, moon, and stars made you so careless (if I may be permitted the expression) as to allow your light and delicate foot to descend upon my corn with so much force? Is it that you are physically incapable of comprehending the direction in which you are proceeding? you nice, clever young man—you!" or words to that effect, he feels better. Swearing has the same soothing effect upon our angry passions that smashing the furniture or slamming the doors is so well known to exercise; added to which it is much cheaper. Swearing clears a man out like a pen'orth of gun-powder does the wash-house chimney. An occasional explosion is good for both. I rather distrust a man who never swears, or savagely kicks the foot-stool, or pokes the fire with unnecessary violence. Without some outlet, the anger caused by the ever-occurring troubles of life is apt to rankle and fester within. The petty annoyance, instead of being thrown from us, sits down beside us and becomes a sorrow, and the little offense is brooded over till, in the hot-bed of rumination, it grows into a great injury, under whose poisonous shadow springs up hatred and revenge.

Swearing relieves the feelings—that is what swearing does. I explained this to my aunt on one occasion, but it didn't answer with her. She said I had no business to have such feelings.

That is what I told Tittums. I told her she ought to be ashamed of herself, brought up in a Christian family as she was, too. I don't so much mind hearing an old cat swear, but I can't bear to see a mere kitten give way to it. It seems sad in one so young.

I put Tittums in my pocket and returned to my desk. I forgot her for the moment, and when I looked I found that she had squirmed out of my pocket on to the table and was trying to swallow the pen; then she put her leg into the ink-pot and upset it; then she licked her leg; then she swore again—at me this time.

I put her down on the floor, and there Tim began rowing with her. I do wish Tim would mind his own business. It was no concern of his what she had been doing. Besides, he is not a saint himself. He is only a two-year-old fox-terrier, and he interferes with everything and gives himself the airs of a gray-headed Scotch collie.

Tittums' mother has come in and Tim has got his nose scratched, for which I am remarkably glad. I have put them all three out in the passage, where they are fighting at the present moment. I'm in a mess with the ink and in a thundering bad temper; and if anything more in the cat or dog line comes fooling about me this morning, it had better bring its own funeral contractor with it.

Yet, in general, I like cats and dogs very much indeed. What jolly chaps they are! They are much superior to human beings as companions. They do not quarrel or argue with you. They never talk about themselves, but listen to you while you talk about yourself, and keep up an appearance of being interested in the conversation. They never make stupid remarks. They never observe to Miss Brown across a dinner-table that they always understood she was very sweet on Mr. Jones (who has just married Miss Robinson). They never mistake your wife's cousin for her husband and fancy that you are the father-in-law. And they never ask a young author with fourteen tragedies, sixteen comedies, seven farces, and a couple of burlesques in his desk why he doesn't write a play.

They never say unkind things. They never tell us of our faults, "merely for our own good." They do not at inconvenient moments mildly remind us of our past follies and mistakes. They do not say, "Oh, yes, a lot of use you are if you are ever really wanted"—sarcastic like. They never inform us, like our *inamoratas* sometimes do, that we are not nearly so nice as we used to be. We are always the same to them.

They are always glad to see us. They are with us in all our humors. They are merry when we are glad, sober when we feel solemn, and sad when we are sorrowful.

"Halloo! happy and want a lark? Right you are; I'm your man. Here I am, frisking round you,

leaping, barking, pirouetting, ready for any amount of fun and mischief. Look at my eyes if you doubt me. What shall it be? A romp in the drawing-room and never mind the furniture, or a scamper in the fresh, cool air, a scud across the fields and down the hill, and won't we let old Gaffer Goggles' geese know what time o' day it is, neither! Whoop! come along."

Or you'd like to be quiet and think. Very well. Pussy can sit on the arm of the chair and purr, and Montmorency will curl himself up on the rug and blink at the fire, yet keeping one eye on you the while, in case you are seized with any sudden desire in the direction of rats.

And when we bury our face in our hands and wish we had never been born, they don't sit up very straight and observe that we have brought it all upon ourselves. They don't even hope it will be a warning to us. But they come up softly and shove their heads against us. If it is a cat she stands on your shoulder, rumples your hair, and says, "Lor,' I am sorry for you, old man," as plain as words can speak ; and if it is a dog he looks up at you with his big, true eyes and says with them, " Well you've always got me, you know. We'll go through the world together and always stand by each other, won't we?"

He is very imprudent, a dog is. He never makes it his business to inquire whether you are in the right or in the wrong, never bothers as to whether you are going up or down upon life's ladder, never

asks whether you are rich or poor, silly or wise, sinner or saint. You are his pal. That is enough for him, and come luck or misfortune, good repute or bad, honor or shame, he is going to stick to you, to comfort you, guard you, and give his life for you if need be—foolish, brainless, soulless dog !

Ah ! old stanch friend, with your deep, clear eyes and bright, quick glances, that take in all one has to say before one has time to speak it, do you know you are only an animal and have no mind ? Do you know that that dull-eyed, gin-sodden lout leaning against the post out there is immeasurably your intellectual superior ? Do you know that every little-minded, selfish scoundrel who lives by cheating and tricking, who never did a gentle deed or said a kind word, who never had a thought that was not mean and low or a desire that was not base, whose every action is a fraud, whose every utterance is a lie—do you know that these crawling skulks (and there are millions of them in the world), do you know they are all as much superior to you as the sun is superior to rushlight, you honorable, brave-hearted, unselfish brute ? They are MEN, you know, and MEN are the greatest, and noblest, and wisest, and best beings in the whole vast eternal universe. Any man will tell you that.

Yes, poor doggie, you are very stupid, very stupid indeed, compared with us clever men, who understand all about politics and philosophy, and who know everything, in short, except what we are and where we came from and whither we are going,

and what everything outside this tiny world and most things in it are.

Never mind, though, pussy and doggie, we like you both all the better for your being stupid. We all like stupid things. Men can't bear clever women, and a woman's ideal man is some one she can call a "dear old stupid." It is so pleasant to come across people more stupid than ourselves. We love them at once for being so. The world must be rather a rough place for clever people. Ordinary folk dislike them, and as for themselves, they hate each other most cordially.

But there, the clever people are such a very insignificant minority that it really doesn't much matter if they are unhappy. So long as the foolish people can be made comfortable the world, as a whole, will get on tolerably well.

Cats have the credit of being more worldly wise than dogs—of looking more after their own interests and being less blindly devoted to those of their friends. And we men and women are naturally shocked at such selfishness. Cats certainly do love a family that has a carpet in the kitchen more than a family that has not; and if there are many children about, they prefer to spend their leisure time next door. But, taken altogether, cats are libeled. Make a friend of one, and she will stick to you through thick and thin. All the cats that I have had have been most firm comrades. I had a cat once that used to follow me about everywhere, until it even got quite embarrassing, and I

had to beg her, as a personal favor, not to accompany me any further down the High Street. She used to sit up for me when I was late home and meet me in the passage. It made me feel quite like a married man, except that she never asked where I had been and then didn't believe me when I told her.

Another cat I had used to get drunk regularly every day. She would hang about for hours outside the cellar door for the purpose of sneaking in on the first opportunity and lapping up the drippings from the beer-cask. I do not mention this habit of hers in praise of the species, but merely to show how almost human some of them are. If the transmigration of souls is a fact, this animal was certainly qualifying most rapidly for a Christian, for her vanity was only second to her love of drink. Whenever she caught a particularly big rat, she would bring it up into the room where we were all sitting, lay the corpse down in the midst of us, and wait to be praised. Lord! how the girls used to scream.

Poor rats! They seem only to exist so that cats and dogs may gain credit for killing them and chemists make a fortune by inventing specialties in poison for their destruction. And yet there is something fascinating about them. There is a weirdness and uncanniness attaching to them. They are so cunning and strong, so terrible in their numbers, so cruel, so secret. They swarm in deserted houses, where the broken casements hang rotting to the crumbling

walls and the doors swing creaking on their rusty hinges. They know the sinking ship and leave her, no one knows how or whither. They whisper to each other in their hiding-places how a doom will fall upon the hall and the great name die forgotten. They do fearful deeds in ghastly charnel-houses.

No tale of horror is complete without the rats. In stories of ghosts and murderers they scamper through the echoing rooms, and the gnawing of their teeth is heard behind the wainscot, and their gleaming eyes peer through the holes in the worm-eaten tapestry, and they scream in shrill, unearthly notes in the dead of night, while the moaning wind sweeps, sobbing, round the ruined turret towers, and passes wailing like a woman through the chambers bare and tenantless.

And dying prisoners, in their loathsome dungeons, see through the horrid gloom their small red eyes, like glittering coals, hear in the death-like silence the rush of their claw-like feet, and start up shrieking in the darkness and watch through the awful night.

I love to read tales about rats. They make my flesh creep so. I like that tale of Bishop Hatto and the rats. The wicked bishop, you know, had ever so much corn stored in his granaries and would not let the starving people touch it, but when they prayed to him for food gathered them together in his barn, and then shutting the doors on them, set fire to the place and burned them all to death. But next day there came thousands upon

thousands of rats, sent to do judgment on him. Then Bishop Hatto fled to his strong tower that stood in the middle of the Rhine, and barred himself in and fancied he was safe. But the rats! they swam the river, they gnawed their way through the thick stone walls, and ate him alive where he sat.

“They have whetted their teeth against the stones,
And now they pick the bishop’s bones;
They gnawed the flesh from every limb,
For they were sent to do judgment on him.”

Oh, it’s a lovely tale.

Then there is the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, how first he piped the rats away, and afterward, when the mayor broke faith with him, drew all the children along with him and went into the mountain. What a curious old legend that is! I wonder what it means, or has it any meaning at all? There seems something strange and deep lying hid beneath the rippling rhyme. It haunts me, that picture of the quaint, mysterious old piper piping through Hamelin’s narrow streets, and the children following with dancing feet and thoughtful, eager faces. The old folks try to stay them, but the children pay no heed. They hear the weird, witched music and must follow. The games are left unfinished and the playthings drop from their careless hands. They know not whither they are hastening. The mystic music calls to them, and they follow, heedless and unasking where. It stirs and vibrates in their hearts and other sounds grow

faint. So they wander through Pied Piper Street away from Hamelin town.

I get thinking sometimes if the Pied Piper is really dead, or if he may not still be roaming up and down our streets and lanes, but playing now so softly that only the children hear him. Why do the little faces look so grave and solemn when they pause awhile from romping, and stand, deep wrapt, with straining eyes? They only shake their curly heads and dart back laughing to their playmates when we question them. But I fancy myself they have been listening to the magic music of the old Pied Piper, and perhaps with those bright eyes of theirs have even seen his odd, fantastic figure gliding unnoticed through the whirl and throng.

Even we grown-up children hear his piping now and then. But the yearning notes are very far away, and the noisy, blustering world is always bellowing so loud it drowns the dream-like melody. One day the sweet, sad strains will sound out full and clear, and then we too shall, like the little children, throw our playthings all aside and follow. The loving hands will be stretched out to stay us, and the voices we have learned to listen for will cry to us to stop. But we shall push the fond arms gently back and pass out through the sorrowing house and through the open door. For the wild, strange music will be ringing in our hearts, and we shall know the meaning of its song by then.

I wish people could love animals without getting maudlin over them, as so many do. Women are

the most hardened offenders in such respects, but even our intellectual sex often degrade pets into nuisances by absurd idolatry. There are the gushing young ladies who, having read "*David Copperfield*," have thereupon sought out a small, long-haired dog of nondescript breed, possessed of an irritating habit of criticising a man's trousers, and of finally commenting upon the same by a sniff indicative of contempt and disgust. They talk sweet girlish prattle to this animal (when there is any one near enough to overhear them), and they kiss its nose, and put its unwashed head up against their cheek in a most touching manner; though I have noticed that these caresses are principally performed when there are young men hanging about.

Then there are the old ladies who worship a fat poodle, scant of breath and full of fleas. I knew a couple of elderly spinsters once who had a sort of German sausage on legs which they called a dog between them. They used to wash its face with warm water every morning. It had a mutton cutlet regularly for breakfast; and on Sundays, when one of the ladies went to church, the other always stopped at home to keep the dog company.

There are many families where the whole interest of life is centered upon the dog. Cats, by the way, rarely suffer from excess of adulation. A cat possesses a very fair sense of the ridiculous, and will put her paw down kindly but firmly upon any nonsense of this kind. Dogs, however, seem to like it. They encourage their owners in the tomfoolery,

and the consequence is that in the circles I am speaking of what "dear Fido" has done, does do, will do, won't do, can do, can't do, was doing, is doing, is going to do, shall do, shan't do, and is about to be going to have done is the continual theme of discussion from morning till night.

All the conversation, consisting, as it does, of the very dregs of imbecility, is addressed to this confounded animal. The family sit in a row all day long, watching him, commenting upon his actions, telling each other anecdotes about him, recalling his virtues, and remembering with tears how one day they lost him for two whole hours, on which occasion he was brought home in a most brutal manner by the butcher-boy, who had been met carrying him by the scruff of his neck with one hand, while soundly cuffing his head with the other.

After recovering from these bitter recollections, they vie with each other in bursts of admiration for the brute, until some more than usually enthusiastic member, unable any longer to control his feelings, swoops down upon the unhappy quadruped in a frenzy of affection, clutches it to his heart, and slobbers over it. Whereupon the others, mad with envy, rise up, and seizing as much of the dog as the greed of the first one has left to them, murmur praise and devotion.

Among these people everything is done through the dog. If you want to make love to the eldest daughter, or get the old man to lend you the garden roller, or the mother to subscribe to the Society

for the Suppression of Solo-Cornet Players in Theatrical Orchestras (it's a pity there isn't one, anyhow), you have to begin with the dog. You must gain its approbation before they will even listen to you, and if, as is highly probable, the animal, whose frank, doggy nature has been warped by the unnatural treatment he has received, responds to your overtures of friendship by viciously snapping at you, your cause is lost forever.

"If Fido won't take to any one," the father has thoughtfully remarked beforehand, "I say that man is not to be trusted. You know, Maria, how often I have said that. Ah! he knows, bless him."

Drat him!

And to think that the surly brute was once an innocent puppy, all legs and head, full of fun and play, and burning with ambition to become a big, good dog and bark like mother.

Ah me! life sadly changes us all. The world seems a vast horrible grinding machine, into which what is fresh and bright and pure is pushed at one end, to come out old and crabbed and wrinkled at the other.

Look even at Pussy Sobersides, with her dull, sleepy glance, her grave, slow walk, and dignified, prudish airs; who could ever think that once she was the blue-eyed, whirling, scampering, head-over-heels, mad little firework that we call a kitten?

What marvelous vitality a kitten has. It is really something very beautiful the way life bubbles over in the little creatures. They rush about, and

mew, and spring; dance on their hind legs, embrace everything with their front ones, roll over and over, lie on their backs and kick. They don't know what to do with themselves, they are so full of life.

Can you remember, reader, when you and I felt something of the same sort of thing? Can you remember those glorious days of fresh young manhood—how, when coming home along the moonlit road, we felt too full of life for sober walking, and had to spring and skip, and wave our arms, and shout till belated farmers' wives thought—and with good reason, too—that we were mad, and kept close to the hedge, while we stood and laughed aloud to see them scuttle off so fast, and made their blood run cold with a wild parting whoop, and the tears came, we knew not why? Oh, that magnificent young LIFE! that crowned us kings of the earth; that rushed through every tingling vein till we seemed to walk on air; that thrilled through our throbbing brains and told us to go forth and conquer the whole world; that welled up in our young hearts till we longed to stretch out our arms and gather all the toiling men and women and the little children to our breast and love them all—all. Ah! they were grand days, those deep, full days, when our coming life, like an unseen organ, pealed strange, yearning music in our ears, and our young blood cried out like a war-horse for the battle. Ah, our pulse beats slow and steady now, and our old joints are rheumatic, and we love our easy-chair and pipe and sneer at boys' enthusiasm. But oh for one brief moment of that god-like life again!

ON BEING SHY.

ALL great literary men are shy. I am myself, though I am told it is hardly noticeable.

I am glad it is not. It used to be extremely prominent at one time, and was the cause of much misery to myself and discomfort to every one about me—my lady friends especially complained most bitterly about it.

A shy man's lot is not a happy one. The men dislike him, the women despise him, and he dislikes and despises himself. Use brings him no relief, and there is no cure for him except time; though I once came across a delicious recipe for overcoming the misfortune. It appeared among the "answers to correspondents" in a small weekly journal and ran as follows—I have never forgotten it: "Adopt an easy and pleasing manner, especially toward ladies."

Poor wretch! I can imagine the grin with which he must have read that advice. "Adopt an easy and pleasing manner, especially toward ladies," forsooth! Don't you adopt anything of the kind, my dear young shy friend. Your attempt to put on any other disposition than your own will infallibly result in your becoming ridiculously gushing and of-

fensively familiar. Be your own natural self, and then you will only be thought to be surly and stupid.

The shy man does have some slight revenge upon society for the torture it inflicts upon him. He is able, to a certain extent, to communicate his misery. He frightens other people as much as they frighten him. He acts like a damper upon the whole room, and the most jovial spirits become in his presence depressed and nervous.

This is a good deal brought about by misunderstanding. Many people mistake the shy man's timidity for overbearing arrogance and are awed and insulted by it. His awkwardness is resented as insolent carelessness, and when, terror-stricken at the first word addressed to him, the blood rushes to his head and the power of speech completely fails him, he is regarded as an awful example of the evil effects of giving way to passion.

But, indeed, to be misunderstood is the shy man's fate on every occasion; and whatever impression he endeavors to create, he is sure to convey its opposite. When he makes a joke, it is looked upon as a pretended relation of fact and his want of veracity much condemned. His sarcasm is accepted as his literal opinion and gains for him the reputation of being an ass, while if, on the other hand, wishing to ingratiate himself, he ventures upon a little bit of flattery, it is taken for satire and he is hated ever afterward.

These and the rest of a shy man's troubles are

always very amusing to other people, and have afforded material for comic writing from time immemorial. But if we look a little deeper we shall find there is a pathetic, one might almost say a tragic, side to the picture. A shy man means a lonely man—a man cut off from all companionship, all sociability. He moves about the world, but does not mix with it. Between him and his fellow-men there runs ever an impassable barrier—a strong, invisible wall that, trying in vain to scale, he but bruises himself against. He sees the pleasant faces and hears the pleasant voices on the other side, but he cannot stretch his hand across to grasp another hand. He stands watching the merry groups, and he longs to speak and to claim kindred with them. But they pass him by, chatting gayly to one another, and he cannot stay them. He tries to reach them, but his prison walls move with him and hem him in on every side. In the busy street, in the crowded room, in the grind of work, in the whirl of pleasure, amid the many or amid the few—wherever men congregate together, wherever the music of human speech is heard and human thought is flashed from human eyes, there, shunned and solitary, the shy man, like a leper, stands apart. His soul is full of love and longing, but the world knows it not. The iron mask of shyness is riveted before his face, and the man beneath is never seen. Genial words and hearty greetings are ever rising to his lips, but they die away in unheard whispers behind the steel clamps. His heart aches for the weary brother,

but his sympathy is dumb. Contempt and indignation against wrong choke up his throat, and finding no safety-valve whence in passionate utterance they may burst forth, they only turn in again and harm him. All the hate and scorn and love of a deep nature such as the shy man is ever cursed by fester and corrupt within, instead of spending themselves abroad, and sour him into a misanthrope and cynic.

Yes, shy men, like ugly women, have a bad time of it in this world, to go through which with any comfort needs the hide of a rhinoceros. Thick skin is, indeed, our moral clothes, and without it we are not fit to be seen about in civilized society. A poor gasping, blushing creature, with trembling knees and twitching hands, is a painful sight to every one, and if it cannot cure itself, the sooner it goes and hangs itself the better.

The disease can be cured. For the comfort of the shy, I can assure them of that from personal experience. I do not like speaking about myself, as may have been noticed, but in the cause of humanity I on this occasion will do so, and will confess that at one time I was, as the young man in the Bab Ballad says, "the shyest of the shy," and "whenever I was introduced to any pretty maid, my knees they knocked together just as if I was afraid." Now, I would—nay, have—on this very day before yesterday I did the deed. Alone and entirely by myself (as the school-boy said in translating the "*Bellum Gallicum*") did I beard a

railway refreshment-room young lady in her own lair. I rebuked her in terms of mingled bitterness and sorrow for her callousness and want of condescension. I insisted, courteously but firmly, on being accorded that deference and attention that was the right of the traveling Briton, and at the end I looked her full in the face. Need I say more?

True, immediately after doing so I left the room with what may possibly have appeared to be precipitation and without waiting for any refreshment. But that was because I had changed my mind, not because I was frightened, you understand.

One consolation that shy folk can take unto themselves is that shyness is certainly no sign of stupidity. It is easy enough for bull-headed clowns to sneer at nerves, but the highest natures are not necessarily those containing the greatest amount of moral brass. The horse is not an inferior animal to the cock-sparrow, nor the deer of the forest to the pig. Shyness simply means extreme sensibility, and has nothing whatever to do with self-consciousness or with conceit, though its relationship to both is continually insisted upon by the poll-parrot school of philosophy.

Conceit, indeed, is the quickest cure for it. When it once begins to dawn upon you that you are a good deal cleverer than any one else in this world, bashfulness becomes shocked and leaves you. When you can look round a roomful of people and

think that each one is a mere child in intellect compared with yourself, you feel no more shy of them than you would of a select company of magpies or orang-outangs.

Conceit is the finest armor that a man can wear. Upon its smooth, impenetrable surface the puny dagger-thrusts of spite and envy glance harmlessly aside. Without that breast-plate the sword of talent cannot force its way through the battle of life, for blows have to be borne as well as dealt. I do not, of course, speak of the conceit that displays itself in an elevated nose and a falsetto voice. That is not real conceit—that is only playing at being conceited; like children play at being kings and queens and go strutting about with feathers and long trains. Genuine conceit does not make a man objectionable. On the contrary, it tends to make him genial, kind-hearted, and simple. He has no need of affectation—he is far too well satisfied with his own character; and his pride is too deep-seated to appear at all on the outside. Careless alike of praise or blame, he can afford to be truthful. Too far, in fancy, above the rest of mankind to trouble about their petty distinctions, he is equally at home with duke or costermonger. And valuing no one's standard but his own, he is never tempted to practice that miserable pretense that less self-reliant people offer up as an hourly sacrifice to the god of their neighbor's opinion.

The shy man, on the other hand, is humble—modest of his own judgment and over-anxious con-

cerning that of others. But this in the case of a young man is surely right enough. His character is unformed. It is slowly evolving itself out of a chaos of doubt and disbelief. Before the growing insight and experience the diffidence recedes. A man rarely carries his shyness past the hobbledehoy period. Even if his own inward strength does not throw it off, the rubbings of the world generally smooth it down. You scarcely ever meet a really shy man—except in novels or on the stage, where, by the bye, he is much admired, especially by the women.

There, in that supernatural land, he appears as a fair-haired and saint-like young man—fair hair and goodness always go together on the stage. No respectable audience would believe in one without the other. I knew an actor who mislaid his wig once and had to rush on to play the hero in his own hair, which was jet-black, and the gallery howled at all his noble sentiments under the impression that he was the villain. He—the shy young man—loves the heroine, oh so devotedly (but only in asides, for he dare not tell her of it), and he is so noble and unselfish, and speaks in such a low voice, and is so good to his mother; and the bad people in the play, they laugh at him and jeer at him, but he takes it all so gently, and in the end it transpires that he is such a clever man, though nobody knew it, and then the heroine tells him she loves him, and he is so surprised, and oh, so happy! and everybody loves him and asks him to forgive them, which he does in

a few well-chosen and sarcastic words, and blesses them; and he seems to have generally such a good time of it that all the young fellows who are not shy long to be shy. But the really shy man knows better. He knows that it is not quite so pleasant in reality. He is not quite so interesting there as in the fiction. He is a little more clumsy and stupid and a little less devoted and gentle, and his hair is much darker, which, taken altogether, considerably alters the aspect of the case.

The point where he does resemble his ideal is in his faithfulness. I am fully prepared to allow the shy young man that virtue: he is constant in his love. But the reason is not far to seek. The fact is it exhausts all his stock of courage to look one woman in the face, and it would be simply impossible for him to go through the ordeal with a second. He stands in far too much dread of the whole female sex to want to go gadding about with many of them. One is quite enough for him.

Now, it is different with the young man who is not shy. He has temptations which his bashful brother never encounters. He looks around and everywhere sees roguish eyes and laughing lips. What more natural than that amid so many roguish eyes and laughing lips he should become confused and, forgetting for the moment which particular pair of roguish eyes and laughing lips it is that he belongs to, go off making love to the wrong set. The shy man, who never looks at anything but his own boots, sees not and is not tempted. Happy shy man!

Not but what the shy man himself would much rather not be happy in that way. He longs to "go it" with the others, and curses himself every day for not being able to. He will now and again, screwing up his courage by a tremendous effort, plunge into roguishness. But it is always a terrible *fiasco*, and after one or two feeble flounders he crawls out again, limp and pitiable.

I say "pitiable," though I am afraid he never is pitied. There are certain misfortunes which, while inflicting a vast amount of suffering upon their victims, gain for them no sympathy. Losing an umbrella, falling in love, toothache, black eyes, and having your hat sat upon may be mentioned as a few examples, but the chief of them all is shyness. The shy man is regarded as an animate joke. His tortures are the sport of the drawing-room arena and are pointed out and discussed with much gusto.

"Look," cry his tittering audience to each other; "he's blushing!"

"Just watch his legs," says one.

"Do you notice how he is sitting?" adds another: "right on the edge of the chair."

"Seems to have plenty of color," sneers a military-looking gentleman.

"Pity he's got so many hands," murmurs an elderly lady, with her own calmly folded on her lap. "They quite confuse him."

"A yard or two off his feet wouldn't be a disadvantage," chimes in the comic man, "especially as he seems so anxious to hide them."

And then another suggests that with such a voice he ought to have been a sea-captain. Some draw attention to the desperate way in which he is grasping his hat. Some comment upon his limited powers of conversation. Others remark upon the troublesome nature of his cough. And so on, until his peculiarities and the company are both thoroughly exhausted.

His friends and relations make matters still more unpleasant for the poor boy (friends and relations are privileged to be more disagreeable than other people). Not content with making fun of him among themselves, they insist on his seeing the joke. They mimic and caricature him for his own edification. One, pretending to imitate him, goes outside and comes in again in a ludicrously nervous manner, explaining to him afterward that that is the way he—meaning the shy fellow—walks into a room ; or, turning to him with “This is the way you shake hands,” proceeds to go through a comic pantomime with the rest of the room, taking hold of every one’s hand as if it were a hot plate and flabbily dropping it again. And then they ask him why he blushes, and why he stammers, and why he always speaks in an almost inaudible tone, as if they thought he did it on purpose. Then one of them, sticking out his chest and strutting about the room like a pouter-pigeon, suggests quite seriously that that is the style he should adopt. The old man slaps him on the back and says : “Be bold my boy. Don’t be afraid of any

one." The mother says, "Never do anything that you need be ashamed of, Algernon, and then you never need be ashamed of anything you do," and, beaming mildly at him, seems surprised at the clearness of her own logic. The boys tell him that he's "worse than a girl," and the girls repudiate the implied slur upon their sex by indignantly exclaiming that they are sure no girl would be half as bad.

They are quite right; no girl would be. There is no such thing as a shy woman, or, at all events, I have never come across one, and until I do I shall not believe in them. I know that the generally accepted belief is quite the reverse. All women are supposed to be like timid, startled fawns, blushing and casting down their gentle eyes when looked at and running away when spoken to; while we men are supposed to be a bold and rollicky lot, and the poor, dear little women admire us for it, but are terribly afraid of us. It is a pretty theory, but, like most generally accepted theories, mere nonsense. The girl of twelve is self-contained and as cool as the proverbial cucumber, while her brother of twenty stammers and stutters by her side. A woman will enter a concert-room late, interrupt the performance, and disturb the whole audience without moving a hair, while her husband follows her, a crushed heap of apologizing misery.

The superior nerve of women in all matters connected with love, from the casting of the first sheep's-eye down to the end of the honeymoon, is too well acknowledged to need comment. Nor is

the example a fair one to cite in the present instance, the positions not being equally balanced. Love is woman's business, and in "business" we all lay aside our natural weaknesses—the shyest man I ever knew was a photographic tout.

ON BABIES.

Oh, yes, I do—I know a lot about 'em. I was one myself once, though not long—not so long as my clothes. They were very long, I recollect, and always in my way when I wanted to kick. Why do babies have such yards of unnecessary clothing? It is not a riddle. I really want to know. I never could understand it. Is it that the parents are ashamed of the size of the child and wish to make believe that it is longer than it actually is? I asked a nurse once why it was. She said :

“Lor', sir, they always have long clothes, bless their little hearts.”

And when I explained that her answer, although doing credit to her feelings, hardly disposed of my difficulty, she replied :

“Lor', sir, you wouldn't have 'em in short clothes, poor little dears?” And she said it in a tone that seemed to imply I had suggested some unmanly outrage.

Since then I have felt shy at making inquiries on the subject, and the reason—if reason there be—is still a mystery to me. But indeed, putting them in any clothes at all seems absurd to my mind. Goodness knows there is enough of dressing and un-

dressing to be gone through in life without beginning it before we need; and one would think that people who live in bed might at all events be spared the torture. Why wake the poor little wretches up in the morning to take one lot of clothes off, fix another lot on, and put them to bed again, and then at night haul them out once more, merely to change everything back? And when all is done, what difference is there, I should like to know, between a baby's night-shirt and the thing it wears in the day-time?

Very likely, however, I am only making myself ridiculous—I often do, so I am informed—and I will therefore say no more upon this matter of clothes, except only that it would be of great convenience if some fashion were adopted enabling you to tell a boy from a girl.

At present it is most awkward. Neither hair, dress, nor conversation affords the slightest clew, and you are left to guess. By some mysterious law of nature you invariably guess wrong, and are thereupon regarded by all the relatives and friends as a mixture of fool and knave, the enormity of alluding to a male babe as “she” being only equaled by the atrocity of referring to a female infant as “he.” Whichever sex the particular child in question happens not to belong to is considered as beneath contempt, and any mention of it is taken as a personal insult to the family.

And as you value your fair name do not attempt to get out of the difficulty by talking of “it.”

There are various methods by which you may achieve ignominy and shame. By murdering a large and respected family in cold blood and afterward depositing their bodies in the water companies' reservoir, you will gain much unpopularity in the neighborhood of your crime, and even robbing a church will get you cordially disliked, especially by the vicar. But if you desire to drain to the dregs the fullest cup of scorn and hatred that a fellow human creature can pour out for you, let a young mother hear you call dear baby "it."

Your best plan is to address the article as "little angel." The noun "angel" being of common gender suits the case admirably, and the epithet is sure of being favorably received. "Pet" or "beauty" are useful for variety's sake, but "angel" is the term that brings you the greatest credit for sense and good-feeling. The word should be preceded by a short giggle and accompanied by as much smile as possible. And whatever you do, don't forget to say that the child has got its father's nose. This "fetches" the parents (if I may be allowed a vulgarity) more than anything. They will pretend to laugh at the idea at first and will say, "Oh, nonsense!" You must then get excited and insist that it is a fact. You need have no conscientious scruples on the subject, because the thing's nose really does resemble its father's—at all events quite as much as it does anything else in nature—being, as it is, a mere smudge.

Do not despise these hints, my friends. There

may come a time when, with mamma on one side and grandmamma on the other, a group of admiring young ladies (not admiring you, though) behind, and a bald-headed dab of humanity in front, you will be extremely thankful for some idea of what to say. A man—an unmarried man, that is—is never seen to such disadvantage as when undergoing the ordeal of “seeing baby.” A cold shudder runs down his back at the bare proposal, and the sickly smile with which he says how delighted he shall be ought surely to move even a mother’s heart, unless, as I am inclined to believe, the whole proceeding is a mere device adopted by wives to discourage the visits of bachelor friends.

It is a cruel trick, though, whatever its excuse may be. The bell is rung and somebody sent to tell nurse to bring baby down. This is the signal for all the females present to commence talking “baby,” during which time you are left to your own sad thoughts and the speculations upon the practicability of suddenly recollecting an important engagement, and the likelihood of your being believed if you do. Just when you have concocted an absurdly implausible tale about a man outside, the door opens, and a tall, severe-looking woman enters, carrying what at first sight appears to be a particularly skinny bolster, with the feathers all at one end. Instinct, however, tells you that this is the baby, and you rise with a miserable attempt at appearing eager. When the first gush of feminine enthusiasm with which the object in question is received has died

out, and the number of ladies talking at once has been reduced to the ordinary four or five, the circle of fluttering petticoats divides, and room is made for you to step forward. This you do with much the same air that you would walk into the dock at Bow Street, and then, feeling unutterably miserable, you stand solemnly staring at the child. There is dead silence, and you know that every one is waiting for you to speak. You try to think of something to say, but find, to your horror, that your reasoning faculties have left you. It is a moment of despair, and your evil genius, seizing the opportunity, suggests to you some of the most idiotic remarks that it is possible for a human being to perpetrate. Glancing round with an imbecile smile, you sniggeringly observe that "it hasn't got much hair, has it?" Nobody answers you for a minute, but at last the stately nurse says with much gravity: "It is not customary for children five weeks old to have long hair." Another silence follows this, and you feel you are being given a second chance, which you avail yourself of by inquiring if it can walk yet, or what they feed it on.

By this time you have got to be regarded as not quite right in your head, and pity is the only thing felt for you. The nurse, however, is determined that, insane or not, there shall be no shirking and that you shall go through your task to the end. In the tones of a high-priestess directing some religious mystery she says, holding the bundle toward you: "Take her in your arms, sir." You are too crushed

to offer any resistance and so meekly accept the burden. "Put your arm more down her middle, sir," says the high-priestess, and then all step back and watch you intently as though you were going to do a trick with it.

What to do you know no more than you did what to say. It is certain something must be done, and the only thing that occurs to you is to heave the unhappy infant up and down to the accompaniment of "oopsee-daisy," or some remark of equal intelligence. "I wouldn't jig her, sir, if I were you," says the nurse; "a very little upsets her." You promptly decide not to jig her and sincerely hope that you have not gone too far already.

At this point the child itself, who has hitherto been regarding you with an expression of mingled horror and disgust, puts an end to the nonsense by beginning to yell at the top of its voice, at which the priestess rushes forward and snatches it from you with "There! there! there! What did ums do to ums?" "How very extraordinary!" you say pleasantly. "Whatever made it go off like that?" "Oh, why, you must have done something to her!" says the mother indignantly; "the child wouldn't scream like that for nothing." It is evident they think you have been running pins into it.

The brat is calmed at last, and would no doubt remain quiet enough, only some mischievous busy-body points you out again with "Who's this, baby?" and the intelligent child, recognising you, howls louder than ever.

Whereupon some fat old lady remarks that "it's strange how children take a dislike to any one." "Oh, they know," replies another mysteriously. "It's a wonderful thing," adds a third; and then everybody looks sideways at you, convinced you are a scoundrel of the blackest dye; and they glory in the beautiful idea that your true character, unguessed by your fellow-men, has been discovered by the untaught instinct of a little child.

Babies, though, with all their crimes and errors, are not without their use—not without use, surely, when they fill an empty heart; not without use when, at their call, sunbeams of love break through care-clouded faces; not without use when their little fingers press wrinkles into smiles.

Odd little people! They are the unconscious comedians of the world's great stage. They supply the humor in life's all-too-heavy drama. Each one, a small but determined opposition to the order of things in general, is forever doing the wrong thing at the wrong time, in the wrong place and in the wrong way. The nurse-girl who sent Jenny to see what Tommy and Totty were doing and "tell 'em they mustn't" knew infantile nature. Give an average baby a fair chance, and if it doesn't do something it oughtn't to a doctor should be called in at once.

They have a genius for doing the most ridiculous things, and they do them in a grave, stoical manner that is irresistible. The business-like air with which two of them will join hands and proceed due east

at a break-neck toddle, while an excitable big sister is roaring for them to follow her in a westerly direction, is most amusing—except, perhaps, for the big sister. They walk round a soldier, staring at his legs with the greatest curiosity, and poke him to see if he is real. They stoutly maintain, against all argument and much to the discomfort of the victim, that the bashful young man at the end of the 'bus is "dadda." A crowded street-corner suggests itself to their minds as a favorable spot for the discussion of family affairs at a shrill treble. When in the middle of crossing the road they are seized with a sudden impulse to dance, and the doorstep of a busy shop is the place they always select for sitting down and taking off their shoes.

When at home they find the biggest walking-stick in the house or an umbrella—open preferred—of much assistance in getting upstairs. They discover that they love Mary Ann at the precise moment when that faithful domestic is blackleading the stove, and nothing will relieve their feelings but to embrace her then and there. With regard to food, their favorite dishes are coke and cat's meat. They nurse pussy upside down, and they show their affection for the dog by pulling his tail.

They are a deal of trouble, and they make a place untidy and they cost a lot of money to keep; but still you would not have the house without them. It would not be home without their noisy tongues and their mischief-making hands. Would not the rooms seem silent without their pattering feet, and

might not you stray apart if no prattling voices called you together?

It should be so, and yet I have sometimes thought the tiny hand seemed as a wedge, dividing. It is a bearish task to quarrel with that purest of all human affections—that perfecting touch to a woman's life—a mother's love. It is a holy love, that we coarser-fibered men can hardly understand, and I would not be deemed to lack reverence for it when I say that surely it need not swallow up all other affection. The baby need not take your whole heart, like the rich man who walled up the desert well. Is there not another thirsty traveler standing by?

In your desire to be a good mother, do not forget to be a good wife. No need for all the thought and care to be only for one. Do not, whenever poor Edwin wants you to come out, answer indignantly, "What, and leave baby!" Do not spend all your evenings upstairs, and do not confine your conversation exclusively to whooping-cough and measles. My dear little woman, the child is not going to die every time it sneezes, the house is not bound to get burned down and the nurse run away with a soldier every time you go outside the front door; nor the cat sure to come and sit on the precious child's chest the moment you leave the bedside. You worry yourself a good deal too much about that solitary chick, and you worry everybody else too. Try and think of your other duties, and your pretty face will not be always puckered into wrinkles, and

there will be cheerfulness in the parlor as well as in the nursery. Think of your big baby a little. Dance him about a bit; call him pretty names; laugh at him now and then. It is only the first baby that takes up the whole of a woman's time. Five or six do not require nearly so much attention as one. But before then the mischief has been done. A house where there seems no room for him and a wife too busy to think of him have lost their hold on that so unreasonable husband of yours, and he has learned to look elsewhere for comfort and companionship.

But there, there, there! I shall get myself the character of a baby-hater if I talk any more in this strain. And Heaven knows I am not one. Who could be, to look into the little innocent faces clustered in timid helplessness round those great gates that open down into the world?

The world—the small round world! what a vast mysterious place it must seem to baby eyes! What a trackless continent the back garden appears! What marvelous explorations they make in the cellar under the stairs! With what awe they gaze down the long street, wondering, like us bigger babies when we gaze up at the stars, where it all ends!

And down that longest street of all—that long, dim street of life that stretches out before them—what grave, old-fashioned looks they seem to cast! What pitiful, frightened looks sometimes! I saw a little mite sitting on a doorstep in a Soho slum one

night, and I shall never forget the look that the gas-lamp showed me on its wizen face—a look of dull despair, as if from the squalid court the vista of its own squalid life had risen, ghost-like, and struck its heart dead with horror.

Poor little feet, just commencing the stony journey! We old travelers, far down the road, can only pause to wave a hand to you. You come out of the dark mist, and we, looking back, see you, so tiny in the distance, standing on the brow of the hill, your arms stretched out toward us. God speed you! We would stay and take your little hands in ours, but the murmur of the great sea is in our ears and we may not linger. We must hasten down, for the shadowy ships are waiting to spread their sable sails.

ON EATING AND DRINKING.

I ALWAYS was fond of eating and drinking, even as a child—especially eating, in those early days. I had an appetite then, also a digestion. I remember a dull-eyed, livid-complexioned gentleman coming to dine at our house once. He watched me eating for about five minutes, quite fascinated seemingly, and then he turned to my father with—

“Does your boy ever suffer from dyspepsia?”

“I never heard him complain of anything of that kind,” replied my father. “Do you ever suffer from dyspepsia, Collywobbles?” (They called me Collywobbles, but it was not my real name.)

“No, pa,” I answered. After which I added: “What is dyspepsia, pa?”

My livid-complexioned friend regarded me with a look of mingled amazement and envy. Then in a tone of infinite pity he slowly said:

“You will know—some day.”

My poor, dear mother used to say she liked to see me eat, and it has always been a pleasant reflection to me since that I must have given her much gratification in that direction. A growing, healthy lad, taking plenty of exercise and careful to restrain himself from indulging in too much study, can generally

satisfy the most exacting expectations as regards his feeding powers.

It is amusing to see boys eat when you have not got to pay for it. Their idea of a square meal is a pound and a half of roast beef with five or six good-sized potatoes (soapy ones preferred as being more substantial), plenty of greens, and four thick slices of Yorkshire pudding, followed by a couple of currant dumplings, a few green apples, a pen'orth of nuts, half a dozen jumbles, and a bottle of ginger-beer. After that they play at horses.

How they must despise us men, who require to sit quiet for a couple of hours after dining off a spoonful of clear soup and the wing of a chicken!

But the boys have not all the advantages on their side. A boy never enjoys the luxury of being satisfied. A boy never feels full. He can never stretch out his legs, put his hands behind his head, and, closing his eyes, sink into the ethereal blissfulness that encompasses the well-dined man. A dinner makes no difference whatever to a boy. To a man it is as a good fairy's potion, and after it the world appears a brighter and a better place. A man who has dined satisfactorily experiences a yearning love toward all his fellow-creatures. He strokes the cat quite gently and calls it "poor pussy," in tones full of the tenderest emotion. He sympathizes with the members of the German band outside and wonders if they are cold; and for the moment he does not even hate his wife's relations.

A good dinner brings out all the softer side of a

man. Under its genial influence the gloomy and morose become jovial and chatty. Sour, starchy individuals, who all the rest of the day go about looking as if they lived on vinegar and Epsom salts, break out into wreathed smiles after dinner, and exhibit a tendency to pat small children on the head and to talk to them—vaguely—about sixpences. Serious men thaw and become mildly cheerful, and snobbish young men of the heavy-mustache type forget to make themselves objectionable.

I always feel sentimental myself after dinner. It is the only time when I can properly appreciate love-stories. Then, when the hero clasps "her" to his heart in one last wild embrace and stifles a sob, I feel as sad as though I had dealt at whist and turned up only a deuce; and when the heroine dies in the end I weep. If I read the same tale early in the morning I should sneer at it. Digestion, or rather indigestion, has a marvelous effect upon the heart. If I want to write anything very pathetic—I mean, if I want to try to write anything very pathetic—I eat a large plateful of hot buttered muffins about an hour beforehand, and then by the time I sit down to my work a feeling of unutterable melancholy has come over me. I picture heart-broken lovers parting forever at lonely wayside stiles, while the sad twilight deepens around them, and only the tinkling of a distant sheep-bell breaks the sorrow-laden silence. Old men sit and gaze at withered flowers till their sight is dimmed by the mist of tears. Little dainty maidens wait and watch

at open casements ; but " he cometh not," and the heavy years roll by and the sunny gold tresses wear white and thin. The babies that they dandled have become grown men and women with podgy torments of their own, and the playmates that they laughed with are lying very silent under the waving grass. But still they wait and watch, till the dark shadows of the unknown night steal up and gather round them and the world with its childish troubles fades from their aching eyes.

I see pale corpses tossed on white-foamed waves, and death-beds stained with bitter tears, and graves in trackless deserts. I hear the wild wailing of women, the low moaning of little children, the dry sobbing of strong men. It's all the muffins. I could not conjure up one melancholy fancy upon a mutton chop and a glass of champagne.

A full stomach is a great aid to poetry, and indeed no sentiment of any kind can stand upon an empty one. We have not time or inclination to indulge in fanciful troubles until we have got rid of our real misfortunes. We do not sigh over dead dicky-birds with the bailiff in the house, and when we do not know where on earth to get our next shilling from, we do not worry as to whether our mistress' smiles are cold, or hot, or lukewarm, or anything else about them.

Foolish people—when I say " foolish people " in this contemptuous way I mean people who entertain different opinions to mine. If there is one person I do despise more than another, it is the man who

does not think exactly the same on all topics as I do—foolish people, I say, then, who have never experienced much of either, will tell you that mental distress is far more agonizing than bodily. Romantic and touching theory! so comforting to the love-sick young sprig who looks down patronizingly at some poor devil with a white starved face and thinks to himself, “Ah, how happy you are compared with me!”—so soothing to fat old gentlemen who cackle about the superiority of poverty over riches. But it is all nonsense—all cant. An aching head soon makes one forget an aching heart. A broken finger will drive away all recollections of an empty chair. And when a man feels really hungry he does not feel anything else.

We sleek, well-fed folk can hardly realize what feeling hungry is like. We know what it is to have no appetite and not to care for the dainty victuals placed before us, but we do not understand what it means to sicken for food—to die for bread while others waste it—to gaze with famished eyes upon coarse fare steaming behind dingy windows, longing for a pen’orth of pea pudding and not having the penny to buy it—to feel that a crust would be delicious and that a bone would be a banquet.

Hunger is a luxury to us, a piquant, flavor-giving sauce. It is well worth while to get hungry and thirsty merely to discover how much gratification can be obtained from eating and drinking. If you wish to thoroughly enjoy your dinner, take a thirty-mile country walk after breakfast and don’t touch

anything till you get back. How your eyes will glisten at sight of the white table-cloth and steaming dishes then! With what a sigh of content you will put down the empty beer tankard and take up your knife and fork! And how comfortable you feel afterward as you push back your chair, light a cigar, and beam round upon everybody.

Make sure, however, when adopting this plan, that the good dinner is really to be had at the end, or the disappointment is trying. I remember once a friend and I—dear old Joe, it was. Ah! how we lose one another in life's mist. It must be eight years since I last saw Joseph Taboys. How pleasant it would be to meet his jovial face again, to clasp his strong hand, and to hear his cheery laugh once more! He owes me 14 shillings, too. Well, we were on a holiday together, and one morning we had breakfast early and started for a tremendous long walk. We had ordered a duck for dinner over night. We said, "Get a big one, because we shall come home awfully hungry;" and as we were going out our landlady came up in great spirits. She said, "I have got you gentlemen a duck, if you like. If you get through that you'll do well;" and she held up a bird about the size of a door-mat. We chuckled at the sight and said we would try. We said it with self-conscious pride, like men who know their own power. Then we started.

We lost our way, of course. I always do in the country, and it does make me so wild, because it is no use asking direction of any of the people you

meet. One might as well inquire of a lodging-house slavey the way to make beds as expect a country bumpkin to know the road to the next village. You have to shout the question about three times before the sound of your voice penetrates his skull. At the third time he slowly raises his head and stares blankly at you. You yell it at him then for a fourth time, and he repeats it after you. He ponders while you count a couple of hundred, after which, speaking at the rate of three words a minute, he fancies you "couldn't do better than——" Here he catches sight of another idiot coming down the road and bawls out to him the particulars, requesting his advice. The two then argue the case for a quarter of an hour or so, and finally agree that you had better go straight down the lane, round to the right and cross by the third stile, and keep to the left by old Jimmy Milcher's cow-shed, and across the seven-acre field, and through the gate by Squire Grubbin's hay-stack, keeping the bridle-path for awhile till you come opposite the hill where the windmill used to be—but it's gone now—and round to the right, leaving Stiggin's plantation behind you; and you say "Thank you" and go away with a splitting headache, but without the faintest notion of your way, the only clear idea you have on the subject being that somewhere or other there is a stile which has to be got over; and at the next turn you come upon four stiles, all leading in different directions!

We had undergone this ordeal two or three times. We had tramped over fields. We had

waded through brooks and scrambled over hedges and walls. We had had a row as to whose fault it was that we had first lost our way. We had got thoroughly disagreeable, footsore, and weary. But throughout it all the hope of that duck kept us up. A fairy-like vision, it floated before our tired eyes and drew us onward. The thought of it was as a trumpet-call to the fainting. We talked of it and cheered each other with our recollections of it. "Come along," we said; "the duck will be spoiled."

We felt a strong temptation, at one point, to turn into a village inn as we passed and have a cheese and a few loaves between us, but we heroically restrained ourselves; we should enjoy the duck all the better for being famished.

We fancied we smelled it when we go into the town and did the last quarter of a mile in three minutes. We rushed upstairs, and washed ourselves, and changed our clothes, and came down, and pulled our chairs up to the table, and sat and rubbed our hands while the landlady removed the covers, when I seized the knife and fork and started to carve.

It seemed to want a lot of carving. I struggled with it for about five minutes without making the slightest impression, and then Joe, who had been eating potatoes, wanted to know if it wouldn't be better for some one to do the job that understood carving. I took no notice of his foolish remark, but attacked the bird again; and so vigorously this time that the animal left the dish and took refuge in the fender.

We soon had it out of that, though, and I was prepared to make another effort. But Joe was getting unpleasant. He said that if he had thought we were to have a game of blind hockey with the dinner he would have got a bit of bread and cheese outside.

I was too exhausted to argue. I laid down the knife and fork with dignity and took a side seat and Joe went for the wretched creature. He worked away in silence for awhile, and then he muttered "Damn the duck" and took his coat off.

We did break the thing up at length with the aid of a chisel, but it was perfectly impossible to eat it, and we had to make a dinner off the vegetables and an apple tart. We tried a mouthful of the duck, but it was like eating India-rubber.

It was a wicked sin to kill that drake. But there! there's no respect for old institutions in this country.

I started this paper with the idea of writing about eating and drinking, but I seem to have confined my remarks entirely to eating as yet. Well, you see, drinking is one of those subjects with which it is inadvisable to appear too well acquainted. The days are gone by when it was considered manly to go to bed intoxicated every night, and a clear head and a firm hand no longer draw down upon their owner the reproach of effeminacy. On the contrary, in these sadly degenerate days an evil-smelling breath, a blotchy face, a reeling gait, and a husky voice are regarded as the hall marks of the cad rather than of the gentleman.

Even nowadays, though, the thirstiness of mankind is something supernatural. We are forever drinking on one excuse or another. A man never feels comfortable unless he has a glass before him. We drink before meals, and with meals, and after meals. We drink when we meet a friend, also when we part from a friend. We drink when we are talking, when we are reading, and when we are thinking. We drink one another's healths and spoil our own. We drink the queen, and the army, and the ladies, and everybody else that is drinkable ; and I believe if the supply ran short we should drink our mothers-in-law.

By the way, we never eat anybody's health, always drink it. Why should we not stand up now and then and eat a tart to somebody's success ?

To me, I confess the constant necessity of drinking under which the majority of men labor is quite unaccountable. I can understand people drinking to drown care or to drive away maddening thoughts well enough. I can understand the ignorant masses loving to soak themselves in drink—oh, yes, it's very shocking that they should, of course—very shocking to us who live in cozy homes, with all the graces and pleasures of life around us, that the dwellers in damp cellars and windy attics should creep from their dens of misery into the warmth and glare of the public-house bar, and seek to float for a brief space away from their dull world upon a Lethe stream of gin.

But think, before you hold up your hands in hor-

ror at their ill-living, what "life" for these wretched creatures really means. Picture the squalid misery of their brutish existence, dragged on from year to year in the narrow, noisome room where, huddled like vermin in sewers, they welter, and sicken, and sleep; where dirt-grimed children scream and fight and sluttish, shrill-voiced women cuff, and curse, and nag; where the street outside teems with roaring filth and the house around is a bedlam of riot and stench.

Think what a sapless stick this fair flower of life must be to them, devoid of mind and soul. The horse in his stall scents the sweet hay and munches the ripe corn contentedly. The watch-dog in his kennel blinks at the grateful sun, dreams of a glorious chase over the dewy fields, and wakes with a yelp of gladness to greet a caressing hand. But the clod-like life of these human logs never knows one ray of light. From the hour when they crawl from their comfortless bed to the hour when they lounge back into it again they never live one moment of real life. Recreation, amusement, companionship, they know not the meaning of. Joy, sorrow, laughter, tears, love, friendship, longing, despair, are idle words to them. From the day when their baby eyes first look out upon their sordid world to the day when, with an oath, they close them forever and their bones are shoveled out of sight, they never warm to one touch of human sympathy, never thrill to a single thought, never start to a single hope. In the name of the God of mercy,

let them pour the maddening liquor down their throats and feel for one brief moment that they live!

Ah! we may talk sentiment as much as we like, but the stomach is the real seat of happiness in this world. The kitchen is the chief temple wherein we worship, its roaring fire is our vestal flame, and the cook is our great high-priest. He is a mighty magician and a kindly one. He soothes away all sorrow and care. He drives forth all enmity, gladdens all love. Our God is great and the cook is his prophet. Let us eat, drink, and be merry.

ON FURNISHED APARTMENTS.

"OH, you have some rooms to let."

"Mother!"

"Well, what is it?"

"'Ere's a gentleman about the rooms."

"Ask 'im in. I'll be up in a minute."

"Will yer step inside, sir? Mother'll be up in a minute."

So you step inside, and after a minute "mother" comes slowly up the kitchen stairs, untying her apron as she comes and calling down instructions to some one below about the potatoes.

"Good-morning, sir," says "mother," with a washed-out smile. "Will you step this way, please?"

"Oh, it's hardly worth while my coming up," you say. "What sort of rooms are they, and how much?"

"Well," says the landlady, "if you'll step upstairs I'll show them to you."

So with a protesting murmur, meant to imply that any waste of time complained of hereafter must not be laid to your charge, you follow "mother" upstairs.

At the first landing you run up against a pail and a broom, whereupon "mother" expatiates upon the unreliability of servant-girls, and bawls over the balusters for Sarah to come and take them away at once. When you get outside the rooms she pauses, with her hand upon the door, to explain to you that they are rather untidy just at present, as the last lodger left only yesterday; and she also adds that this is their cleaning-day—it always is. With this understanding you enter, and both stand solemnly feasting your eyes upon the scene before you. The rooms cannot be said to appear inviting. Even "mother's" face betrays no admiration. Untenanted "furnished apartments" viewed in the morning sunlight do not inspire cheery sensations. There is a lifeless air about them. It is a very different thing when you have settled down and are living in them. With your old familiar household gods to greet your gaze whenever you glance up, and all your little knick-knacks spread around you—with the photos of all the girls that you have loved and lost ranged upon the mantel-piece, and half a dozen disreputable-looking pipes scattered about in painfully prominent positions—with one carpet slipper peeping from beneath the coal-box and the other perched on the top of the piano—with the well-known pictures to hide the dingy walls, and these dear old friends, your books, higgledy-piggledy all over the place—with the bits of old blue china that your mother prized, and the screen she worked in those far by-gone days, when the sweet old face

was laughing and young, and the white soft hair tumbled in gold-brown curls from under the coal-scuttle bonnet——

Ah, old screen, what a gorgeous personage you must have been in your young days, when the tulips and roses and lilies (all growing from one stem) were fresh in their glistening sheen! Many a summer and winter have come and gone since then, my friend, and you have played with the dancing fire-light until you have grown sad and gray. Your brilliant colors are fast fading now, and the envious moths have gnawed your silken threads. You are withering away like the dead hands that wove you. Do you ever think of those dead hands? You seem so grave and thoughtful sometimes that I almost think you do. Come, you and I and the deep-glowing embers, let us talk together. Tell me in your silent language what you remember of those young days, when you lay on my little mother's lap and her girlish fingers played with your rainbow tresses. Was there never a lad near sometimes—never a lad who would seize one of those little hands to smother it with kisses, and who would persist in holding it, thereby sadly interfering with the progress of your making? Was not your frail existence often put in jeopardy by this same clumsy, headstrong lad, who would toss you disrespectfully aside that he—not satisfied with one—might hold both hands and gaze up into the loved eyes? I can see that lad now through the haze of the flickering twilight. He is an eager, bright-eyed boy, with pinching,

dandy shoes and tight-fitting smalls, snowy shirt frill and stock, and—oh! such curly hair. A wild, light-hearted boy! Can he be the great, grave gentleman upon whose stick I used to ride cross-legged, the care-worn man into whose thoughtful face I used to gaze with childish reverence and whom I used to call “father?” You say “yes,” old screen; but are you quite sure? It is a serious charge you are bringing. Can it be possible? Did he have to kneel down in those wonderful smalls and pick you up and rearrange you before he was forgiven and his curly head smoothed by my mother’s little hand? Ah! old screen, and did the lads and the lassies go making love fifty years ago just as they do now? Are men and women so unchanged? Did little maidens’ hearts beat the same under pearl-embroidered bodices as they do under Mother Hubbard cloaks? Have steel casques and chimney-pot hats made no difference to the brains that work beneath them? Oh, Time! great Chronos! and is this your power? Have you dried up seas and leveled mountains and left the tiny human heart-strings to defy you? Ah, yes! they were spun by a Mightier than thou, and they stretch beyond your narrow ken, for their ends are made fast in eternity. Ay, you may mow down the leaves and the blossoms, but the roots of life lie too deep for your sickle to sever. You refashion Nature’s garments, but you cannot vary by a jot the throbbings of her pulse. The world rolls round obedient to your laws, but the heart of man is not of your kingdom,

for in its birthplace "a thousand years are but as yesterday."

I am getting away, though, I fear, from my "furnished apartments," and I hardly know how to get back. But I have some excuse for my meanderings this time. It is a piece of old furniture that has led me astray, and fancies gather, somehow, round old furniture, like moss around old stones. One's chairs and tables get to be almost part of one's life and to seem like quiet friends. What strange tales the wooden-headed old fellows could tell did they but choose to speak! At what unsuspected comedies and tragedies have they not assisted! What bitter tears have been sobbed into that old sofa cushion! What passionate whisperings the settee must have overheard!

New furniture has no charms for me compared with old. It is the old things that we love—the old faces, the old books, the old jokes. New furniture can make a palace, but it takes old furniture to make a home. Not merely old in itself—lodging-house furniture generally is that—but it must be old to us, old in associations and recollections. The furniture of furnished apartments, however ancient it may be in reality, is new to our eyes, and we feel as though we could never get on with it. As, too, in the case of all fresh acquaintances, whether wooden or human (and there is very little difference between the two species sometimes), everything impresses you with its worst aspect. The knobby wood-work and shiny horse-hair cover-

ing of the easy-chair suggest anything but ease. The mirror is smoky. The curtains want washing. The carpet is frayed. The table looks as if it would go over the instant anything was rested on it. The grate is cheerless, the wall-paper hideous. The ceiling appears to have had coffee spilt all over it, and the ornaments—well, they are worse than the wall-paper.

There must surely be some special and secret manufactory for the production of lodging-house ornaments. Precisely the same articles are to be found at every lodging-house all over the kingdom, and they are never seen anywhere else. There are the two—what do you call them? they stand one at each end of the mantel-piece, where they are never safe, and they are hung round with long triangular slips of glass that clank against one another and make you nervous. In the commoner class of rooms these works of art are supplemented by a couple of pieces of china which might each be meant to represent a cow sitting upon its hind legs, or a model of the temple of Diana at Ephesus, or a dog, or anything else you like to fancy. Somewhere about the room you come across a bilious-looking object, which at first you take to be a lump of dough left about by one of the children, but which on scrutiny seems to resemble an underdone cupid. This thing the landlady calls a statue. Then there is a “sampler” worked by some idiot related to the family, a picture of the “Huguenots,” two or three Scripture texts, and a highly framed and glazed

certificate to the effect that the father has been vaccinated, or is an Odd Fellow, or something of that sort.

You examine these various attractions and then dismally ask what the rent is.

"That's rather a good deal," you say on hearing the figure.

"Well, to tell you the truth," answers the landlady with a sudden burst of candor, "I've always had" (mentioning a sum a good deal in excess of the first-named amount), "and before that I used to have" (a still higher figure).

What the rent of apartments must have been twenty years ago makes one shudder to think of. Every landlady makes you feel thoroughly ashamed of yourself by informing you, whenever the subject crops up, that she used to get twice as much for her rooms as you are paying. Young men lodgers of the last generation must have been of a wealthier class than they are now, or they must have ruined themselves. I should have had to live in an attic.

Curious, that in lodgings the rule of life is reversed. The higher you get up in the world the lower you come down in your lodgings. On the lodging-house ladder the poor man is at the top, the rich man underneath. You start in the attic and work your way down to the first floor.

A good many great men have lived in attics and some have died there. Attics, says the dictionary, are "places where lumber is stored," and the world has used them to store a good deal of its lumber in

at one time or another. Its preachers and painters and poets, its deep-browed men who will find out things, its fire-eyed men who will tell truths that no one wants to hear—these are the lumber that the world hides away in its attics. Haydn grew up in an attic and Chatterton starved in one. Addison and Goldsmith wrote in garrets. Faraday and De Quincey knew them well. Dr. Johnson camped cheerfully in them, sleeping soundly—too soundly sometimes—upon their trundle-beds, like the sturdy old soldier of fortune that he was, inured to hardship and all careless of himself. Dickens spent his youth among them, Morland his old age—alas! a drunken, premature old age. Hans Andersen, the fairy king, dreamed his sweet fancies beneath their sloping roofs. Poor, wayward-hearted Collins leaned his head upon their crazy tables; priggish Benjamin Franklin; Savage, the wrong-headed, much troubled when he could afford any softer bed than a doorstep; young Bloomfield, “Bobby” Burns, Hogarth, Watts the engineer—the roll is endless. Ever since the habitations of men were reared two stories high has the garret been the nursery of genius.

No one who honors the aristocracy of mind can feel ashamed of acquaintanceship with them. Their damp-stained walls are sacred to the memory of noble names. If all the wisdom of the world and all its art—all the spoils that it has won from nature, all the fire that it has snatched from heaven—were gathered together and divided into heaps,

and we could point and say, for instance, these mighty truths were flashed forth in the brilliant *salon* amid the ripple of light laughter and the sparkle of bright eyes; and this deep knowledge was dug up in the quiet study, where the bust of Pallas looks serenely down on the leather-scented shelves; and this heap belongs to the crowded street; and that to the daisied field—the heap that would tower up high above the rest as a mountain above hills would be the one at which we should look up and say: this noblest pile of all—these glorious paintings and this wondrous music, these trumpet words, these solemn thoughts, these daring deeds, they were forged and fashioned amid misery and pain in the sordid squalor of the city garret. There, from their eyries, while the world heaved and throbbed below, the kings of men sent forth their eagle thoughts to wing their flight through the ages. There, where the sunlight streaming through the broken panes fell on rotting boards and crumbling walls; there, from their lofty thrones, those rag-clothed Joves have hurled their thunderbolts and shaken, before now, the earth to its foundations.

Huddle them up in your lumber-rooms, oh, world! Shut them fast in and turn the key of poverty upon them. Weld close the bars, and let them fret their hero lives away within the narrow cage. Leave them there to starve, and rot, and die. Laugh at the frenzied beatings of their hands against the door. Roll onward in your dust and noise and pass them by, forgotten.

But take care lest they turn and sting you. All do not, like the fabled phoenix, warble sweet melodies in their agony ; sometimes they spit venom — venom you must breathe whether you will or no, for you cannot seal their mouths, though you may fetter their limbs. You can lock the door upon them, but they burst open their shaky lattices and call out over the house-tops so that men cannot but hear. You hounded wild Rousseau into the meanest garret of the Rue St. Jacques and jeered at his angry shrieks. But the thin, piping tones swelled a hundred years later into the sullen roar of the French Revolution, and civilization to this day is quivering to the reverberations of his voice.

As for myself, however, I like an attic. Not to live in : as residences they are inconvenient. There is too much getting up and down stairs connected with them to please me. It puts one unpleasantly in mind of the tread-mill. The form of the ceiling offers too many facilities for bumping your head and too few for shaving. And the note of the tom-cat as he sings to his love in the still night outside on the tiles becomes positively distasteful when heard so near.

No, for living in give me a suit of rooms on the first floor of a Piccadilly mansion (I wish somebody would !); but for thinking in let me have an attic up ten flights of stairs in the densest quarter of the city. I have all Herr Teufelsdröckh's affection for attics. There is a sublimity about their loftiness. I love to "sit at ease and look down upon the wasps' nest

beneath;" to listen to the dull murmur of the human tide ebbing and flowing ceaselessly through the narrow streets and lanes below. How small men seem, how like a swarm of ants sweltering in endless confusion on their tiny hill! How petty seems the work on which they are hurrying and skurrying! How childishly they jostle against one another and turn to snarl and scratch! They jabber and screech and curse, but their puny voices do not reach up here. They fret, and fume, and rage, and pant, and die; "but I, mein Werther, sit above it all; I am alone with the stars."

The most extraordinary attic I ever came across was one a friend and I once shared many years ago. Of all eccentrically planned things, from Bradshaw to the maze at Hampton Court, that room was the most eccentric. The architect who designed it must have been a genius, though I cannot help thinking that his talents would have been better employed in contriving puzzles than in shaping human habitations. No figure in Euclid could give any idea of that apartment. It contained seven corners, two of the walls sloped to a point, and the window was just over the fireplace. The only possible position for the bedstead was between the door and the cupboard. To get anything out of the cupboard we had to scramble over the bed, and a large percentage of the various commodities thus obtained was absorbed by the bedclothes. Indeed, so many things were spilled and dropped upon the bed that toward night-time it had become a sort of small coöperative

store. Coal was what it always had most in stock. We used to keep our coal in the bottom part of the cupboard, and when any was wanted we had to climb over the bed, fill a shovelful, and then crawl back. It was an exciting moment when we reached the middle of the bed. We would hold our breath, fix our eyes upon the shovel, and poise ourselves for the last move. The next instant we, and the coals, and the shovel, and the bed would be all mixed up together.

I've heard of the people going into raptures over beds of coal. We slept in one every night and were not in the least stuck up about it.

But our attic, unique though it was, had by no means exhausted the architect's sense of humor. The arrangement of the whole house was a marvel of originality. All the doors opened outward, so that if any one wanted to leave a room at the same moment that you were coming downstairs it was unpleasant for you. There was no ground-floor—its ground-floor belonged to a house in the next court, and the front door opened direct upon a flight of stairs leading down to the cellar. Visitors on entering the house would suddenly shoot past the person who had answered the door to them and disappear down these stairs. Those of a nervous temperament used to imagine that it was a trap laid for them, and would shout murder as they lay on their backs at the bottom till somebody came and picked them up.

It is a long time ago now that I last saw the in-

side of an attic. I have tried various floors since, but I have not found that they have made much difference to me. Life tastes much the same, whether we quaff it from a golden goblet or drink it out of a stone mug. The hours come laden with the same mixture of joy and sorrow, no matter where we wait for them. A waistcoat of broadcloth or of fustian is alike to an aching heart, and we laugh no merrier on velvet cushions than we did on wooden chairs. Often have I sighed in those low-ceilinged rooms, yet disappointments have come neither less nor lighter since I quitted them. Life works upon a compensating balance, and the happiness we gain in one direction we lose in another. As our means increase, so do our desires; and we ever stand midway between the two. When we reside in an attic we enjoy a supper of fried fish and stout. When we occupy the first floor it takes an elaborate dinner at the Continental to give us the same amount of satisfaction.

ON DRESS AND DEPARTMENT.

THEY say—people who ought to be ashamed of themselves do—that the consciousness of being well dressed imparts a blissfulness to the human heart that religion is powerless to bestow. I am afraid these cynical persons are sometimes correct. I know that when I was a very young man (many, many years ago, as the story-books say) and wanted cheering up, I used to go and dress myself in all my best clothes. If I had been annoyed in any manner—if my washerwoman had discharged me, for instance; or my blank-verse poem had been returned for the tenth time, with the editor's compliments "and regrets that owing to want of space he is unable to avail himself of kind offer;" or I had been snubbed by the woman I loved as man never loved before—by the way, it's really extraordinary what a variety of ways of loving there must be. We all do it as it was never done before. I don't know how our great-grandchildren will manage. They will have to do it on their heads by their time if they persist in not clashing with any previous method.

Well, as I was saying, when these unpleasant sort

of things happened and I felt crushed, I put on all my best clothes and went out. It brought back my vanishing self-esteem. In a glossy new hat and a pair of trousers with a fold down the front (carefully preserved by keeping them under the bed—I don't mean on the floor, you know, but between the bed and the mattress), I felt I was somebody and that there were other washerwomen: ay, and even other girls to love, and who would perhaps appreciate a clever, good-looking young fellow. I didn't care; that was my reckless way. I would make love to other maidens. I felt that in those clothes I could do it.

They have a wonderful deal to do with courting, clothes have. It is half the battle. At all events, the young man thinks so, and it generally takes him a couple of hours to get himself up for the occasion. His first half-hour is occupied in trying to decide whether to wear his light suit with a cane and drab billycock, or his black tails with a chimney-pot hat and his new umbrella. He is sure to be unfortunate in either decision. If he wears his light suit and takes the stick it comes on to rain, and he reaches the house in a damp and muddy condition and spends the evening trying to hide his boots. If, on the other hand, he decides in favor of the top hat and umbrella—nobody would ever dream of going out in a top hat without an umbrella; it would be like letting baby (bless it!) toddle out without its nurse. How I do hate a top hat! One lasts me a very long while, I can tell you. I only wear it when—well, never mind when I wear

it. It lasts me a very long while. I've had my present one five years. It was rather old-fashioned last summer, but the shape has come round again now and I look quite stylish.

But to return to our young man and his courting. If he starts off with the top hat and umbrella the afternoon turns out fearfully hot, and the perspiration takes all the soap out of his mustache and converts the beautifully arranged curl over his forehead into a limp wisp resembling a lump of seaweed. The Fates are never favorable to the poor wretch. If he does by any chance reach the door in proper condition, she has gone out with her cousin and won't be back till late.

How a young lover made ridiculous by the gawkiness of modern costume must envy the picturesque gallants of seventy years ago! Look at them (on the Christmas cards), with their curly hair and natty hats, their well-shaped legs incased in smalls, their dainty Hessian boots, their ruffling frills, their canes and dangling seals. No wonder the little maiden in the big poke-bonnet and the light-blue sash casts down her eyes and is completely won. Men could win hearts in clothes like that. But what can you expect from baggy trousers and a monkey-jacket?

Clothes have more effect upon us than we imagine. Our deportment depends upon our dress. Make a man get into seedy, worn-out rags, and he will skulk along with his head hanging down, like a man going out to fetch his own supper beer. But

deck out the same article in gorgeous raiment and fine linen, and he will strut down the main thoroughfare, swinging his cane and looking at the girls as perky as a bantam cock.

Clothes alter our very nature. A man could not help being fierce and daring with a plume in his bonnet, a dagger in his belt, and a lot of puffy white things all down his sleeves. But in an ulster he wants to get behind a lamp-post and call police.

I am quite ready to admit that you can find sterling merit, honest worth, deep affection, and all such like virtues of the roast-beef-and-plum-pudding school as much, and perhaps more, under broad-cloth and tweed as ever existed beneath silk and velvet ; but the spirit of that knightly chivalry that "rode a tilt for lady's love" and "fought for lady's smiles" needs the clatter of steel and the rustle of plumes to summon it from its grave between the dusty folds of tapestry and underneath the musty leaves of moldering chronicles.

The world must be getting old, I think ; it dresses so very soberly now. We have been through the infant period of humanity, when we used to run about with nothing on but a long, loose robe, and liked to have our feet bare. And then came the rough, barbaric age, the boyhood of our race. We didn't care what we wore then, but thought it nice to tattoo ourselves all over, and we never did our hair. And after that the world grew into a young man and became foppish. It decked itself in

flowing curls and scarlet doublets, and went courting, and bragging, and bouncing—making a brave show.

But all those merry, foolish days of youth are gone, and we are very sober, very solemn—and very stupid, some say—now. The world is a grave, middle-aged gentleman in this nineteenth century, and would be shocked to see itself with a bit of finery on. So it dresses in black coats and trousers, and black hats, and black boots, and, dear me, it is such a very respectable gentleman—to think it could ever have gone gadding about as a troubadour or a knight-errant, dressed in all those fancy colors! Ah, well! we are more sensible in this age.

Or at least we think ourselves so. It is a general theory nowadays that sense and dullness go together.

Goodness is another quality that always goes with blackness. Very good people indeed, you will notice, dress altogether in black, even to gloves and neckties, and they will probably take to black shirts before long. Medium goods indulge in light trousers on week-days, and some of them even go so far as to wear fancy waistcoats. On the other hand, people who care nothing for a future state go about in light suits; and there have been known wretches so abandoned as to wear a white hat. Such people, however, are never spoken of in genteel society, and perhaps I ought not to have referred to them here.

By the way, talking of light suits, have you ever noticed how people stare at you the first time you go out in a new light suit? They do not notice it so much afterward. The population of London have got accustomed to it by the third time you wear it. I say "you," because I am not speaking from my own experience. I do not wear such things at all myself. As I said, only sinful people do so.

I wish, though, it were not so, and that one could be good, and respectable, and sensible without making one's self a guy. I look in the glass sometimes at my two long, cylindrical bags (so picturesquely rugged about the knees), my stand-up collar and billycock hat, and wonder what right I have to go about making God's world hideous. Then wild and wicked thoughts come into my heart. I don't want to be good and respectable. (I never can be sensible, I'm told; so that don't matter.) I want to put on lavender-colored tights, with red velvet breeches and a green doublet slashed with yellow; to have a light-blue silk cloak on my shoulder, and a black eagle's plume waving from my hat, and a big sword, and a falcon, and a lance, and a prancing horse, so that I might go about and gladden the eyes of the people. Why should we all try to look like ants crawling over a dust-heap? Why shouldn't we dress a little gayly? I am sure if we did we should be happier. True, it is a little thing, but we are a little race, and what is the use of our pretending otherwise and spoil- ing fun? Let philosophers

get themselves up like old crows if they like. But let me be a butterfly.

Women, at all events, ought to dress prettily. It is their duty. They are the flowers of the earth and were meant to show it up. We abuse them a good deal, we men; but, goodness knows, the old world would be dull enough without their dresses and fair faces. How they brighten up every place they come into! What a sunny commotion they—relations, of course—make in our dingy bachelor chambers! and what a delightful litter their ribbons and laces, and gloves and hats, and parasols and 'kerchiefs make! It is as if a wandering rainbow had dropped in to pay us a visit.

It is one of the chief charms of the summer, to my mind, the way our little maids come out in pretty colors. I like to see the pink and blue and white glancing between the trees, dotting the green fields, and flashing back the sunlight. You can see the bright colors such a long way off. There are four white dresses climbing a hill in front of my window now. I can see them distinctly, though it is three miles away. I thought at first they were mile-stones out for a lark. It's so nice to be able to see the darlings a long way off. Especially if they happen to be your wife and your mother-in-law.

Talking of fields and mile-stones reminds me that I want to say, in all seriousness, a few words about women's boots. The women of these islands all wear boots too big for them. They can never get a boot to fit. The bootmakers do not keep sizes small enough.

Over and over again have I known women sit down on the top rail of a stile and declare they could not go a step further because their boots hurt them so; and it has always been the same complaint—too big.

It is time this state of things was altered. In the name of the husbands and fathers of England, I call upon the bootmakers to reform. Our wives, our daughters, and our cousins are not to be lamed and tortured with impunity. Why cannot “narrow twos” be kept more in stock? That is the size I find most women take.

The waist-band is another item of feminine apparel that is always too big. The dressmakers make these things so loose that the hooks and eyes by which they are fastened burst off, every now and then, with a report like thunder.

Why women suffer these wrongs—why they do not insist in having their clothes made small enough for them I cannot conceive. It can hardly be that they are disinclined to trouble themselves about matters of mere dress, for dress is the one subject that they really do think about. It is the only topic they ever get thoroughly interested in, and they talk about it all day long. If you see two women together, you may bet your bottom dollar they are discussing their own or their friends’ clothes. You notice a couple of child-like beings conversing by a window, and you wonder what sweet, helpful words are falling from their sainted lips. So you move nearer and then you hear one say:

"So I took in the waist-band and let out a seam, and it fits beautifully now."

"Well," says the other, "I shall wear my plum-colored body to the Jones', with a yellow plastron; and they've got some lovely gloves at Puttick's, only one and eleven pence."

I went for a drive through a part of Derbyshire once with a couple of ladies. It was a beautiful bit of country, and they enjoyed themselves immensely. They talked dressmaking the whole time.

"Pretty view, that," I would say, waving my umbrella round. "Look at those blue distant hills! That little white speck, nestling in the woods, is Chatsworth, and over there——"

"Yes, very pretty indeed," one would reply. "Well, why not get a yard of sarsenet?"

"What, and leave the skirt exactly as it is?"

"Certainly. What place d'ye call this?"

Then I would draw their attention to the fresh beauties that kept sweeping into view, and they would glance round and say "charming," "sweetly pretty," and immediately go off into raptures over each other's pocket-handkerchiefs, and mourn with one another over the decadence of cambric frilling.

I believe if two women were cast together upon a desert island, they would spend each day arguing the respective merits of sea-shells and birds' eggs considered as trimmings, and would have a new fashion in fig-leaves every month.

Very young men think a good deal about clothes, but they don't talk about them to each other. They

would not find much encouragement. A fop is not a favorite with his own sex. Indeed, he gets a good deal more abuse from them than is necessary. His is a harmless failing and it soon wears out. Besides, a man who has no foppery at twenty will be a slatternly, dirty-collar, unbrushed-coat man at forty. A little foppishness in a young man is good; it is human. I like to see a young cock ruffle his feathers, stretch his neck, and crow as if the whole world belonged to him. I don't like a modest, retiring man. Nobody does—not really, however much they may prate about modest worth and other things they do not understand.

A meek deportment is a great mistake in the world. Uriah Heap's father was a very poor judge of human nature, or he would not have told his son, as he did, that people liked humbleness. There is nothing annoys them more, as a rule. Rows are half the fun of life, and you can't have rows with humble, meek-answering individuals. They turn away our wrath, and that is just what we do not want. We want to let it out. We have worked ourselves up into a state of exhilarating fury, and then just as we are anticipating the enjoyment of a vigorous set-to, they spoil all our plans with their exasperating humility.

Xantippe's life must have been one long misery, tied to that calmly irritating man, Socrates. Fancy a married woman doomed to live on from day to day without one single quarrel with her husband! A man ought to humor his wife in these things.

Heaven knows their lives are dull enough, poor girls. They have none of the enjoyments we have. They go to no political meetings; they may not even belong to the local amateur parliament; they are excluded from smoking-carriages on the Metropolitan Railway, and they never see a comic paper—or if they do, they do not know it is comic: nobody tells them.

Surely, with existence such a dreary blank for them as this, we might provide a little row for their amusement now and then, even if we do not feel inclined for it ourselves. A really sensible man does so and is loved accordingly, for it is little acts of kindness such as this that go straight to a woman's heart. It is such like proofs of loving self-sacrifice that make her tell her female friends what a good husband he was—after he is dead.

Yes, poor Xantippe must have had a hard time of it. The bucket episode was particularly sad for her. Poor woman! she did think she would rouse him up a bit with that. She had taken the trouble to fill the bucket, perhaps been a long way to get specially dirty water. And she waited for him. And then to be met in such a way, after all! Most likely she sat down and had a good cry afterward. It must have seemed all so hopeless to the poor child; and for all we know she had no mother to whom she could go and abuse him.

What was it to her that her husband was a great philosopher? Great philosophy don't count in married life.

There was a very good little boy once who wanted to go to sea. And the captain asked him what he could do. He said he could do the multiplication-table backward and paste sea-weed in a book; that he knew how many times the word "begat" occurred in the Old Testament; and could recite "The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck" and Wordsworth's "We Are Seven."

"Werry good—werry good, indeed," said the man of the sea, "and ken ye kerry coals?"

It is just the same when you want to marry. Great ability is not required so much as little usefulness. Brains are at a discount in the married state. There is no demand for them, no appreciation even. Our wives sum us up according to a standard of their own, in which brilliancy of intellect obtains no marks. Your lady and mistress is not at all impressed by your cleverness and talent, my dear reader—not in the slightest. Give her a man who can do an errand neatly, without attempting to use his own judgment over it or any nonsense of that kind; and who can be trusted to hold a child the right way up, and not make himself objectionable whenever there is lukewarm mutton for dinner. That is the sort of a husband a sensible woman likes; not one of your scientific or literary nuisances, who go upsetting the whole house and putting everybody out with their foolishness.

ON MEMORY.

“ I remember, I remember,
In the days of chill November,
How the blackbird on the——”

I FORGET the rest. It is the beginning of the first piece of poetry I ever learned ; for

“ Hey, diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,”

I take no note of, it being of a frivolous character and lacking in the qualities of true poetry. I collected fourpence by the recital of “ I remember, I remember.” I knew it was fourpence, because they told me that if I kept it until I got twopence more I should have sixpence, which argument, albeit undeniable, moved me not, and the money was squandered, to the best of my recollection, on the very next morning, although upon what memory is a blank.

That is just the way with Memory ; nothing that she brings to us is complete. She is a willful child ; all her toys are broken. I remember tumbling into a huge dust-hole when a very small boy, but I have not the faintest recollection of ever getting out again ; and if memory were all we had to trust to, I should be compelled to believe I ~~was~~ there still.

At another time—some years later—I was assisting at an exceedingly interesting love scene; but the only thing about it I can call to mind distinctly is that at the most critical moment somebody suddenly opened the door and said, “Emily, you’re wanted,” in a sepulchral tone that gave one the idea the police had come for her. All the tender words she said to me and all the beautiful things I said to her are utterly forgotten.

Life altogether is but a crumbling ruin when we turn to look behind: a shattered column here, where a massive portal stood; the broken shaft of a window to mark my lady’s bower; and a moldering heap of blackened stones where the glowing flames once leaped, and over all the tinted lichen and the ivy clinging green.

For everything looms pleasant through the softening haze of time. Even the sadness that is past seems sweet. Our boyish days look very merry to us now, all nutting, hoop, and gingerbread. The snubbings and toothaches and the Latin verbs are all forgotten—the Latin verbs especially. And we fancy we were very happy when we were hobble-dehoys and loved; and we wish that we could love again. We never think of the heartaches, or the sleepless nights, or the hot dryness of our throats, when she said she could never be anything to us but a sister—as if any man wanted more sisters!

Yes, it is the brightness, not the darkness, that we see when we look back. The sunshine casts no shadows on the past. The road that we have

traversed stretches very fair behind us. We see not the sharp stones. We dwell but on the roses by the wayside, and the strong briars that stung us are, to our distant eyes, but gentle tendrils waving in the wind. God be thanked that it is so—that the ever-lengthening chain of memory has only pleasant links, and that the bitterness and sorrow of to-day are smiled at on the morrow.

It seems as though the brightest side of everything were also its highest and best, so that as our little lives sink back behind us into the dark sea of forgetfulness, all that which is the lightest and the most gladsome is the last to sink, and stands above the waters, long in sight, when the angry thoughts and smarting pain are buried deep below the waves and trouble us no more.

It is this glamour of the past, I suppose, that makes old folk talk so much nonsense about the days when they were young. The world appears to have been a very superior sort of place then, and things were more like what they ought to be. Boys were boys then, and girls were very different. Also winters were something like winters, and summers not at all the wretched things we get put off with nowadays. As for the wonderful deeds people did in those times and the extraordinary events that happened, it takes three strong men to believe half of them.

I like to hear one of the old boys telling all about it to a party of youngsters who he knows cannot contradict him. It is odd if, after awhile, he doesn't

swear that the moon shone every night when he was a boy, and that tossing mad bulls in a blanket was the favorite sport at his school.

It always has been and always will be the same. The old folk of our grandfathers' young days sang a song bearing exactly the same burden; and the young folk of to-day will drone out precisely similar nonsense for the aggravation of the next generation. "Oh, give me back the good old days of fifty years ago," has been the cry ever since Adam's fifty-first birthday. Take up the literature of 1835, and you will find the poets and novelists asking for the same impossible gift as did the German Minnesingers long before them and the old Norse Saga writers long before that. And for the same thing sighed the early prophets and the philosophers of ancient Greece. From all accounts, the world has been getting worse and worse ever since it was created. All I can say is that it must have been a remarkably delightful place when it was first opened to the public, for it is very pleasant even now if you only keep as much as possible in the sunshine and take the rain good-temperedly.

Yet there is no gainsaying but that it must have been somewhat sweeter in that dewy morning of creation, when it was young and fresh, when the feet of the tramping millions had not trodden its grass to dust, nor the din of the myriad cities chased the silence forever away. Life must have been noble and solemn to those free-footed, loose-robed fathers of the human race, walking hand in hand

with God under the great sky. They lived in sun-kissed tents amid the lowing herds. They took their simple wants from the loving hand of Nature. They toiled and talked and thought ; and the great earth rolled around in stillness, not yet laden with trouble and wrong.

Those days are past now. The quiet childhood of Humanity, spent in the far-off forest glades and by the murmuring rivers, is gone forever ; and human life is deepening down to manhood amid tumult, doubt, and hope. Its age of restful peace is past. It has its work to finish and must hasten on. What that work may be—what this world's share is in the great design—we know not, though our unconscious hands are helping to accomplish it. Like the tiny coral insect working deep under the dark waters, we strive and struggle each for our own little ends, nor dream of the vast fabric we are building up for God.

Let us have done with vain regrets and longings for the days that never will be ours again. Our work lies in front, not behind us ; and "Forward !" is our motto. Let us not sit with folded hands, gazing upon the past as if it were the building ; it is but the foundation. Let us not waste heart and life thinking of what might have been and forgetting the may be that lies before us. Opportunities flit by while we sit regretting the chances we have lost, and the happiness that comes to us we heed not, because of the happiness that is gone.

Years ago, when I used to wander of an evening

from the fireside to the pleasant land of fairy-tales, I met a doughty knight and true. Many dangers had he overcome, in many lands had been; and all men knew him for a brave and well-tried knight, and one that knew not fear; except, maybe, upon such seasons when even a brave man might feel afraid and yet not be ashamed. Now, as this knight one day was pricking wearily along a toilsome road, his heart misgave him and was sore within him because of the trouble of the way. Rocks, dark and of a monstrous size, hung high above his head, and like enough it seemed unto the knight that they should fall and he lie low beneath them. Chasms there were on either side, and darksome caves wherein fierce robbers lived, and dragons, very terrible, whose jaws dripped blood. And upon the road there hung a darkness as of night. So it came over that good knight that he would no more press forward, but seek another road, less grievously beset with difficulty unto his gentle steed. But when in haste he turned and looked behind, much marveled our brave knight, for lo! of all the way that he had ridden there was naught for eye to see; but at his horse's heels there yawned a mighty gulf, whereof no man might ever spy the bottom, so deep was that same gulf. Then when Sir Ghelent saw that of going back there was none, he prayed to good Saint Cuthbert, and setting spurs into his steed rode forward bravely and most joyously. And naught harmed him.

There is no returning on the road of life. The

frail bridge of time on which we tread sinks back into eternity at every step we take. The past is gone from us forever. It is gathered in and garnered. It belongs to us no more. No single word can ever be unspoken; no single step retraced. Therefore it beseems us as true knights to prick on bravely, not idly weep because we cannot now recall.

A new life begins for us with every second. Let us go forward joyously to meet it. We must press on whether we will or no, and we shall walk better with our eyes before us than with them ever cast behind.

A friend came to me the other day and urged me very eloquently to learn some wonderful system by which you never forgot anything. I don't know why he was so eager on the subject, unless it be that I occasionally borrow an umbrella and have a knack of coming out, in the middle of a game of whist, with a mild "Lor! I've been thinking all along that clubs were trumps." I declined the suggestion, however, in spite of the advantages he so attractively set forth. I have no wish to remember everything. There are many things in most men's lives that had better be forgotten. There is that time, many years ago, when we did not act quite as honorably, quite as uprightly, as we perhaps should have done—that unfortunate deviation from the path of strict probity we once committed, and in which, more unfortunate still, we were found out—that act of folly, of meanness, of

wrong. Ah, well! we paid the penalty, suffered the maddening hours of vain remorse, the hot agony of shame, the scorn, perhaps, of those we loved. Let us forget. Oh, Father Time, lift with your kindly hands those bitter memories from off our overburdened hearts, for griefs are ever coming to us with the coming hours, and our little strength is only as the day.

Not that the past should be buried. The music of life would be mute if the chords of memory were snapped asunder. It is but the poisonous weeds, not the flowers, that we should root out from the garden of Mnemosyne. Do you remember Dickens' "Haunted Man"—how he prayed for forgetfulness, and how, when his prayer was answered, he prayed for memory once more? We do not want all the ghosts laid. It is only the haggard, cruel-eyed specters that we flee from. Let the gentle, kindly phantoms haunt us as they will; we are not afraid of them.

Ah me! the world grows very full of ghosts as we grow older. We need not seek in dismal churchyards nor sleep in moated granges to see the shadowy faces and hear the rustling of their garments in the night. Every house, every room, every creaking chair has its own particular ghost. They haunt the empty chambers of our lives, they throng around us like dead leaves whirled in the autumn wind. Some are living, some are dead We know not. We clasped their hands once, loved them, quarreled with them, laughed with them, told

them our thoughts and hopes and aims, as they told us theirs, till it seemed our very hearts had joined in a grip that would defy the puny power of Death. They are gone now; lost to us forever. Their eyes will never look into ours again and their voices we shall never hear. Only their ghosts come to us and talk with us. We see them, dim and shadowy, through our tears. We stretch our yearning hands to them, but they are air.

Ghosts! They are with us night and day. They walk beside us in the busy street under the glare of the sun. They sit by us in the twilight at home. We see their little faces looking from the windows of the old school-house. We meet them in the woods and lanes where we shouted and played as boys. Hark! cannot you hear their low laughter from behind the blackberry-bushes and their distant whoops along the grassy glades? Down here, through the quiet fields and by the wood, where the evening shadows are lurking, winds the path where we used to watch for her at sunset. Look, she is there now, in the dainty white frock we knew so well, with the big bonnet dangling from her little hands and the sunny brown hair all tangled. Five thousand miles away! Dead for all we know! What of that? She is beside us now, and we can look into her laughing eyes and hear her voice. She will vanish at the stile by the wood and we shall be alone; and the shadows will creep out across the fields and the night wind will sweep past moaning. Ghosts! they are always with us and

always will be while the sad old world keeps echoing to the sob of long good-bys, while the cruel ships sail away across the great seas, and the cold green earth lies heavy on the hearts of those we loved.

But, oh, ghosts, the world would be sadder still without you. Come to us and speak to us, oh you ghosts of our old loves! Ghosts of playmates, and of sweethearts, and old friends, of all you laughing boys and girls, oh, come to us and be with us, for the world is very lonely, and new friends and faces are not like the old, and we cannot love them, nay, nor laugh with them as we have loved and laughed with you. And when we walked together, oh, ghosts of our youth, the world was very gay and bright; but now it has grown old and we are growing weary, and only you can bring the brightness and the freshness back to us.

Memory is a rare ghost-raiser. Like a haunted house, its walls are ever echoing to unseen feet. Through the broken casements we watch the flitting shadows of the dead, and the saddest shadows of them all are the shadows of our own dead selves.

Oh, those young bright faces, so full of truth and honor, of pure, good thoughts, of noble longings, how reproachfully they look upon us with their deep, clear eyes!

I fear they have good cause for their sorrow, poor lads. Lies and cunning and disbelief have crept into our hearts since those preshaving days—and we meant to be so great and good.

It is well we cannot see into the future. There are few boys of fourteen who would not feel ashamed of themselves at forty.

I like to sit and have a talk sometimes with that odd little chap that was myself long ago. I think he likes it too, for he comes so often of an evening when I am alone with my pipe, listening to the whispering of the flames. I see his solemn little face looking at me through the scented smoke as it floats upward, and I smile at him; and he smiles back at me, but his is such a grave, old-fashioned smile. We chat about old times; and now and then he takes me by the hand, and then we slip through the black bars of the grate and down the dusky glowing caves to the land that lies behind the fire-light. There we find the days that used to be, and we wander along them together. He tells me as we walk all he thinks and feels. I laugh at him now and then, but the next moment I wish I had not, for he looks so grave I am ashamed of being frivolous. Besides, it is not showing proper respect to one so much older than myself—to one who was myself so very long before I became myself.

We don't talk much at first, but look at one another; I down at his curly hair and little blue bow, he up sideways at me as he trots. And somehow I fancy the shy, round eyes do not altogether approve of me, and he heaves a little sigh, as though he were disappointed. But after awhile his bashfulness wears off and he begins to chat. He tells me his favorite fairy-tales, he can do up to six times,

and he has a guinea-pig, and pa says fairy-tales ain't true ; and isn't it a pity ? 'cos he would so like to be a knight and fight a dragon and marry a beautiful princess. But he takes a more practical view of life when he reaches seven, and would prefer to grow up, be a bargee, and earn a lot of money. Maybe this is the consequence of falling in love, which he does about this time with the young lady at the milk shop æt. six. (God bless her little ever-dancing feet, whatever size they may be now !) He must be very fond of her, for he gives her one day his chiefest treasure, to wit, a huge pocket-knife with four rusty blades and a corkscrew, which latter has a knack of working itself out in some mysterious manner and sticking into its owner's leg. She is an affectionate little thing, and she throws her arms round his neck and kisses him for it, then and there, outside the shop. But the stupid world (in the person of the boy at the cigar emporium next door) jeers at such tokens of love. Whereupon my young friend very properly prepares to punch the head of the boy at the cigar emporium next door ; but fails in the attempt, the boy at the cigar emporium next door punching his instead.

And then comes school life, with its bitter little sorrows and its joyous shoutings, its jolly larks, and its hot tears falling on beastly Latin grammars and silly old copy-books. It is at school that he injures himself for life—as I firmly believe—trying to pronounce German ; and it is there, too, that he learns of the importance attached by the French nation to

pens, ink, and paper. "Have you pens, ink, and paper?" is the first question asked by one Frenchman of another on their meeting. The other fellow has not any of them, as a rule, but says that the uncle of his brother has got them all three. The first fellow doesn't appear to care a hang about the uncle of the other fellow's brother; what he wants to know now is, has the neighbor of the other fellow's mother got 'em? "The neighbor of my mother has no pens, no ink, and no paper," replies the other man, beginning to get wild. "Has the child of thy female gardener some pens, some ink, or some paper?" He has him there. After worrying enough about these wretched inks, pens, and paper to make everybody miserable, it turns out that the child of his own female gardener hasn't any. Such a discovery would shut up any one but a French exercise man. It has no effect at all, though, on this shameless creature. He never thinks of apologizing, but says his aunt has some mustard.

So in the acquisition of more or less useless knowledge, soon happily to be forgotten, boyhood passes away. The red-brick school-house fades from view, and we turn down into the world's high-road. My little friend is no longer little now. The short jacket has sprouted tails. The battered cap, so useful as a combination of pocket-handkerchief, drinking-cup, and weapon of attack, has grown high and glossy; and instead of a slate-pencil in his mouth there is a cigarette, the smoke of which troubles him, for it will get up his nose. He tries a cigar a little

later on as being more stylish—a big black Havana. It doesn't seem altogether to agree with him, for I find him sitting over a bucket in the back kitchen afterward, solemnly swearing never to smoke again.

And now his mustache begins to be almost visible to the naked eye, whereupon he immediately takes to brandy-and-sodas and fancies himself a man. He talks about "two to one against the favorite," refers to actresses as "Little Emmy" and "Kate" and "Baby," and murmurs about his "losses at cards the other night" in a style implying that thousands have been squandered, though, to do him justice, the actual amount is most probably one-and-twopence. Also, if I see aright—for it is always twilight in this land of memories—he sticks an eyeglass in his eye and stumbles over everything.

His female relations, much troubled at these things, pray for him (bless their gentle hearts!) and see visions of Old Bailey trials and halters as the only possible outcome of such reckless dissipation; and the prediction of his first school-master, that he would come to a bad end, assumes the proportions of inspired prophecy.

He has a lordly contempt at this age for the other sex, a blatantly good opinion of himself, and a sociably patronizing manner toward all the elderly male friends of the family. Altogether, it must be confessed, he is somewhat of a nuisance about this time.

It does not last long, though. He falls in love in

a little while, and that soon takes the bounce out of him. I notice his boots are much too small for him now, and his hair is fearfully and wonderfully arranged. He reads poetry more than he used, and he keeps a rhyming dictionary in his bedroom. Every morning Emily Jane finds scraps of torn-up paper on the floor and reads thereon of "cruel hearts and love's deep darts," of "beauteous eyes and lovers' sighs," and much more of the old, old song that lads so love to sing and lassies love to listen to while giving their dainty heads a toss and pretending never to hear.

The course of love, however, seems not to have run smoothly, for later on he takes more walking exercise and less sleep, poor boy, than is good for him; and his face is suggestive of anything but wedding-bells and happiness ever after.

And here he seems to vanish. The little, boyish self that has grown up beside me as we walked is gone.

I am alone and the road is very dark. I stumble on, I know not how nor care, for the way seems leading nowhere, and there is no light to guide.

But at last the morning comes, and I find that I have grown into myself.

THE END.

STAGE-LAND.

TO
THAT HIGHLY RESPECTABLE BUT UNNECESSARILY
RETIRING INDIVIDUAL,
OF WHOM
WE HEAR SO MUCH
BUT
SEE SO LITTLE,
'THE EARNEST STUDENT OF THE DRAMA,'
THIS
(COMPARATIVELY) TRUTHFUL LITTLE BOOK
IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED.



STAGE-LAND.

THE HERO.

His name is George, generally speaking. "Call me George!" he says to the heroine. She calls him George (in a very low voice, because she is so young and timid). Then he is happy.

The stage hero never has any work to do. He is always hanging about and getting into trouble. His chief aim in life is to be accused of crimes he has never committed, and if he can muddle things up with a corpse in some complicated way so as to get himself reasonably mistaken for the murderer, he feels his day has not been wasted.

He has a wonderful gift of speech and a flow of language calculated to strike terror to the bravest heart. It is a grand thing to hear him bullyragging the villain.

The stage hero is always entitled to "estates," chiefly remarkable for their high state of cultivation and for the eccentric ground plan of the "manor house" upon them. The house is never more than

one story high, but it makes up in green stuff over the porch what it lacks in size and convenience.

The chief drawback in connection with it, to our eyes, is that all the inhabitants of the neighboring village appear to live in the front garden, but the hero evidently thinks it rather nice of them, as it enables him to make speeches to them from the front doorstep—his favorite recreation.

There is generally a public-house immediately opposite. This is handy.

These "estates" are a great anxiety to the stage hero. He is not what you would call a business man, as far as we can judge, and his attempts to manage his own property invariably land him in ruin and distraction. His "estates," however, always get taken away from him by the villain before the first act is over, and this saves him all further trouble with regard to them until the end of the play, when he gets saddled with them once more.

Not but what it must be confessed that there is much excuse for the poor fellow's general bewilderment concerning his affairs and for his legal errors and confusions generally. Stage "law" may not be quite the most fearful and wonderful mystery in the whole universe, but it's near it—very near it. We were under the impression at one time that we ourselves knew something—just a little—about statutory and common law, but after paying attention to the legal points of one or two plays we found that we were mere children at it.

We thought we would not be beaten, and we determined to get to the bottom of stage law and to understand it; but after some six months' effort our brain (a singularly fine one) began to soften, and we abandoned the study, believing it would come cheaper in the end to offer a suitable reward, of about £50,000 or £60,000, say, to any one who would explain it to us.

The reward has remained unclaimed to the present day and is still open.

One gentleman did come to our assistance a little while ago, but his explanations only made the matter more confusing to our minds than it was before. He was surprised at what he called our density, and said the thing was all clear and simple to him. But we discovered afterward that he was an escaped lunatic.

The only points of stage "law" on which we are at all clear are as follows:

That if a man dies without leaving a will, then all his property goes to the nearest villain.

But if a man dies and leaves a will, then all his property goes to whoever can get possession of that will.

That the accidental loss of the three-and-sixpenny copy of a marriage certificate annuls the marriage.

That the evidence of one prejudiced witness of shady antecedents is quite sufficient to convict the most stainless and irreproachable gentleman of crimes for the committal of which he could have had no possible motive.

But that this evidence may be rebutted years afterward, and the conviction quashed without further trial by the unsupported statement of the comic man.

That if A forges B's name to a check, then the law of the land is that B shall be sentenced to ten years' penal servitude.

That ten minutes' notice is all that is required to foreclose a mortgage.

That all trials of criminal cases take place in the front parlor of the victim's house, the villain acting as counsel, judge, and jury rolled into one, and a couple of policemen being told off to follow his instructions.

These are a few of the more salient features of stage "law" so far as we have been able to grasp it up to the present; but as fresh acts and clauses and modifications appear to be introduced for each new play, we have abandoned all hope of ever being able to really comprehend the subject.

To return to our hero, the state of the law, as above sketched, naturally confuses him, and the villain, who is the only human being who does seem to understand stage legal questions, is easily able to fleece and ruin him. The simple-minded hero signs mortgages, bills of sale, deeds of gift, and such like things, under the impression that he is playing some sort of a round game; and then when he cannot pay the interest they take his wife and children away from him and turn him adrift into the world.

Being thrown upon his own resources, he naturally starves.

He can make long speeches, he can tell you all his troubles, he can stand in the lime-light and strike attitudes, he can knock the villain down, and he can defy the police, but these requirements are not much in demand in the labor market, and as they are all he can do or cares to do, he finds earning his living a much more difficult affair than he fancied.

There is a deal too much hard work about it for him. He soon gives up trying it at all, and prefers to eke out an uncertain existence by sponging upon good-natured old Irish women and generous but weak-minded young artisans who have left their native village to follow him and enjoy the advantage of his company and conversation.

And so he drags out his life during the middle of the piece, raving at fortune, raging at humanity, and whining about his miseries until the last act.

Then he gets back those "estates" of his into his possession once again, and can go back to the village and make more moral speeches and be happy.

Moral speeches are undoubtedly his leading article, and of these, it must be owned, he has an inexhaustible stock. He is as chock-full of noble sentiments as a bladder is of wind. They are weak and watery sentiments of the sixpenny tea-meeting order. We have a dim notion that we have heard them before. The sound of them always conjures up to our mind the vision of a dull long room, full of oppressive silence, broken only by the scratching of steel pens and an occasional whispered "Give us

a suck, Bill. You know I always liked you ;” or a louder “Please, sir, speak to Jimmy Boggles. He’s a-jogging my elbow.”

The stage hero, however, evidently regards these meanderings as gems of brilliant thought, fresh from the philosophic mine.

The gallery greets them with enthusiastic approval. They are a warm-hearted people, galleryites, and they like to give a hearty welcome to old friends.

And then, too, the sentiments are so good and a British gallery is so moral. We doubt if there could be discovered on this earth any body of human beings half so moral—so fond of goodness, even when it is slow and stupid—so hateful of meanness in word or deed—as a modern theatrical gallery.

The early Christian martyrs were sinful and worldly compared with an Adelphi gallery.

The stage hero is a very powerful man. You wouldn’t think it to look at him, but you wait till the heroine cries “Help! Oh, George, save me!” or the police attempt to run him in. Then two villains, three extra hired ruffians and four detectives are about his fighting-weight.

If he knocks down less than three men with one blow, he fears that he must be ill, and wonders “Why this strange weakness?”

The hero has his own way of making love. He always does it from behind. The girl turns away from him when he begins (she being, as we have said, shy and timid), and he takes hold of her hands and breathes his attachment down her back.

The stage hero always wears patent-leather boots, and they are always spotlessly clean. Sometimes he is rich and lives in a room with seven doors to it, and at other times he is starving in a garret; but in either event he still wears brand-new patent-leather boots.

He might raise at least three-and-sixpence on those boots, and when the baby is crying for food, it occurs to us that it would be better if, instead of praying to Heaven, he took off those boots and pawned them; but this does not seem to occur to him.

He crosses the African desert in patent-leather boots, does the stage hero. He takes a supply with him when he is wrecked on an uninhabited island. He arrives from long and trying journeys; his clothes are ragged and torn, but his boots are new and shiny. He puts on patent-leather boots to tramp through the Australian bush, to fight in Egypt, to discover the north pole.

Sometimes he is a gold-digger, sometimes a dock laborer, sometimes a soldier, sometimes a sailor, but whatever he is he wears patent-leather boots.

He goes boating in patent leather boots, he plays cricket in them; he goes fishing and shooting in them. He will go to heaven in patent-leather boots or he will decline the invitation.

The stage hero never talks in a simple, straightforward way, like a mere ordinary mortal.

"You will write to me when you are away, dear, won't you?" says the heroine.

A mere human being would reply :

“Why, of course I shall, ducky, every day.”

But the stage hero is a superior creature. He says :

“Dost see yonder star, sweet?”

She looks up and owns that she does see yonder star ; and then off he starts and drivels on about that star for full five minutes, and says he will cease to write to her when that pale star has fallen from its place amid the firmament of heaven.

The result of a long course of acquaintanceship with stage heroes has been, so far as we are concerned, to create a yearning for a new kind of stage hero. What we would like for a change would be a man who wouldn't cackle and brag quite so much, but who was capable of taking care of himself for a day without getting into trouble.

THE VILLAIN.

He wears a clean collar and smokes a cigarette; that is how we know he is a villain. In real life it is often difficult to tell a villain from an honest man, and this gives rise to mistakes; but on the stage, as we have said, villains wear clean collars and smoke cigarettes, and thus all fear of blunder is avoided.

It is well that the rule does not hold off the stage, or good men might be misjudged. We ourselves, for instance, wear a clean collar—sometimes.

It might be very awkward for our family, especially on Sundays.

He has no power of repartee, has the stage villain. All the good people in the play say rude and insulting things to him, and smack at him, and score off him all through the act, but he can never answer them back—can never think of anything clever to say in return.

“Ha! ha! wait till Monday week,” is the most brilliant retort that he can make, and he has to get into a corner by himself to think of even that.

The stage villain’s career is always very easy and prosperous up to within a minute of the end of each act. Then he gets suddenly let in, generally by the

comic man. It always happens so. Yet the villain is always intensely surprised each time. He never seems to learn anything from experience.

A few years ago the villain used to be blessed with a hopeful and philosophical temperament, which enabled him to bear up under these constantly recurring disappointments and reverses. It was "no matter," he would say. Crushed for the moment though he might be, his buoyant heart never lost courage. He had a simple, child-like faith in Providence. "A time will come," he would remark, and this idea consoled him.

Of late, however, this trusting hopefulness of his, as expressed in the beautiful lines we have quoted, appears to have forsaken him. We are sorry for this. We always regarded it as one of the finest traits in his character.

The stage villain's love for the heroine is sublime in its steadfastness. She is a woman of lugubrious and tearful disposition, added to which she is usually incumbered with a couple of priggish and highly objectionable children, and what possible attraction there is about her we ourselves can never understand; but the stage villain—well, there, he is fairly mashed on her.

Nothing can alter his affection. She hates him and insults him to an extent that is really unlady-like. Every time he tries to explain his devotion to her, the hero comes in and knocks him down in the middle of it, or the comic man catches him during one or the other of his harassing love-scenes with

her, and goes off and tells the "villagers" or the "guests," and they come round and nag him (we should think that the villain must grow to positively dislike the comic man before the piece is over).

Notwithstanding all this he still hankers after her and swears she shall be his. He is not a bad-looking fellow, and from what we know of the market, we should say there are plenty of other girls who would jump at him; yet for the sake of settling down with this dismal young female as his wife, he is prepared to go through a laborious and exhaustive course of crime and to be bullied and insulted by every one he meets. His love sustains him under it all. He robs and forges, and cheats, and lies, and murders, and arsons. If there were any other crimes he could commit to win her affection, he would, for her sweet sake, commit them cheerfully. But he doesn't know any others—at all events, he is not well up in any others—and she still does not care for him, and what is he to do?

It is very unfortunate for both of them. It is evident to the merest spectator that the lady's life would be much happier if the villain did not love her quite so much; and as for him, his career might be calmer and less criminal but for his deep devotion to her.

You see, it is having met her in early life that is the cause of all the trouble. He first saw her when she was a child, and he loved her, "ay, even then." Ah, and he would have worked—slaved for her, and have made her rich and happy. He might perhaps even have been a good man.

She tries to soothe him. She says she loathed him with an unspeakable horror from the first moment that her eyes met his revolting form. She says she saw a hideous toad once in a nasty pond, and she says that rather would she take that noisome reptile and clasp its slimy bosom to her own than tolerate one instant's touch from his (the villain's) arms.

This sweet prattle of hers, however, only charms him all the more. He says he will win her yet

Nor does the villain seem much happier in his less serious love episodes. After he has indulged in a little badinage of the above character with his real lady-love, the heroine, he will occasionally try a little light flirtation passage with her maid or lady friend.

The maid or friend does not waste time in simile or in metaphor. She calls him a black-hearted scoundrel and clumps him over the head.

Of recent years it has been attempted to cheer the stage villain's loveless life by making the village clergyman's daughter gone on him. But it is generally about ten years ago when even she loved him, and her love has turned to hate by the time the play opens; so that on the whole his lot can hardly be said to have been much improved in this direction.

Not but what it must be confessed that her change of feeling is, under the circumstances, only natural. He took her away from her happy, peaceful home when she was very young and brought her

up to this wicked overgrown London. He did not marry her. There is no earthly reason why he should not have married her. She must have been a fine girl at that time (and she is a good-looking woman as it is, with dash and go about her), and any other man would have settled down cozily with her and have led a simple, blameless life.

But the stage villain is built cussed.

He ill-uses this female most shockingly—not for any cause or motive whatever; indeed, his own practical interests should prompt him to treat her well and keep friends with her—but from the natural cussedness to which we have just alluded. When he speaks to her he seizes her by the wrist and breathes what he's got to say into her ear, and it tickles and revolts her.

The only thing in which he is good to her is in the matter of dress. He does not stint her in dress.

The stage villain is superior to the villain of real life. The villain of real life is actuated by mere sordid and selfish motives. The stage villain does villainy, not for any personal advantage to himself, but merely from the love of the thing as an art. Villainy is to him its own reward; he revels in it.

“Better far be poor and villainous,” he says to himself, “than possess all the wealth of the Indies with a clear conscience. I will be a villain,” he cries. “I will, at great expense and inconvenience to myself, murder the good old man, get the hero accused of the crime, and make love to his wife while he is in prison. It will be a risky and labori-

ous business for me from beginning to end, and can bring me no practical advantage whatever. The girl will call me insulting names when I pay her a visit, and will push me violently in the chest when I get near her ; her golden-haired infant will say I am a bad man and may even refuse to kiss me. The comic man will cover me with humorous opprobrium, and the villagers will get a day off and hang about the village pub and hoot me. Everybody will see through my villainy, and I shall be nabbed in the end. I always am. But it is no matter, I will be a villain—ha ! ha !”

On the whole, the stage villain appears to us to be a rather badly used individual. He never has any “estates” or property himself, and his only chance of getting on in the world is to sneak the hero’s. He has an affectionate disposition, and never having any wife of his own he is compelled to love other people’s ; but his affection is ever unrequited, and everything comes wrong for him in the end.

Our advice to stage villains generally, after careful observation of (stage) life and (stage) human nature, is as follows :

Never be a stage villain at all if you can help it. The life is too harassing and the remuneration altogether disproportionate to the risks and labor.

If you have run away with the clergyman’s daughter and she still clings to you, do not throw her down in the center of the stage and call her names. It only irritates her, and she takes a dislike to you and goes and warns the other girl.

Don't have too many accomplices; and if you have got them, don't keep sneering at them and bullying them. A word from them can hang you, and yet you do all you can to rile them. Treat them civilly and let them have their fair share of the swag.

Beware of the comic man. When you are committing a murder or robbing a safe you never look to see where the comic man is. You are so careless in that way. On the whole, it might be as well if you murdered the comic man early in the play.

Don't make love to the hero's wife. She doesn't like you; how can you expect her to? Besides, it isn't proper. Why don't you get a girl of your own?

Lastly, don't go down to the scenes of your crimes in the last act. You always will do this. We suppose it is some extra cheap excursion down there that attracts you. But take our advice and don't go. That is always where you get nabbed. The police know your habits from experience. They do not trouble to look for you. They go down in the last act to the old hall or the ruined mill where you did the deed and wait for you.

In nine cases out of ten you would get off scot-free but for this idiotic custom of yours. Do keep away from the place. Go abroad or to the sea-side when the last act begins and stop there till it is over. You will be safe then.

THE HEROINE.

SHE is always in trouble—and don't she let you know it, too! Her life is undeniably a hard one. Nothing goes right with her. We all have our troubles, but the stage heroine never has anything else. If she only got one afternoon a week off from trouble or had her Sundays free it would be something.

But no; misfortune stalks beside her from week's beginning to week's end.

After her husband has been found guilty of murder, which is about the least thing that can ever happen to him, and her white-haired father has become a bankrupt and has died of a broken heart, and the home of her childhood has been sold up, then her infant goes and contracts a lingering fever.

She weeps a good deal during the course of her troubles, which we suppose is only natural enough, poor woman. But it is depressing from the point of view of the audience, and we almost wish before the evening is out that she had not got quite so much trouble.

It is over the child that she does most of her weeping. The child has a damp time of it al-

together. We sometimes wonder that it never catches rheumatism.

She is very good, is the stage heroine. The comic man expresses a belief that she is a born angel. She reproves him for this with a tearful smile (it wouldn't be her smile if it wasn't tearful).

"Oh, no," she says (sadly of course); "I have many, many faults."

We rather wish that she would show them a little more. Her excessive goodness seems somehow to pall upon us. Our only consolation while watching her is that there are not many good women off the stage. Life is bad enough as it is; if there were many women in real life as good as the stage heroine, it would be unbearable.

The stage heroine's only pleasure in life is to go out in a snow-storm without an umbrella and with no bonnet on. She has a bonnet, we know (rather a tasteful little thing); we have seen it hanging up behind the door of her room; but when she comes out for a night stroll during a heavy snow-storm (accompanied by thunder), she is most careful to leave it at home. Maybe she fears the snow will spoil it, and she is a careful girl.

She always brings her child out with her on these occasions. She seems to think that it will freshen it up. The child does not appreciate the snow as much as she does. He says it's cold.

One thing that must irritate the stage heroine very much on these occasions is the way in which the

snow seems to lie in wait for her and follow her about. It is quite a fine night before she comes on the scene: the moment she appears it begins to snow. It snows heavily all the while she remains about, and the instant she goes it clears up again and keeps dry for the rest of the evening.

The way the snow "goes" for that poor woman is most unfair. It always snows much heavier in the particular spot where she is sitting than it does anywhere else in the whole street. Why, we have sometimes seen a heroine sitting in the midst of a blinding snow-storm while the other side of the road was as dry as a bone. And it never seemed to occur to her to cross over.

We have even known a more than unusually malignant snow-storm to follow a heroine three times round the stage and then go off (R.) with her.

Of course you can't get away from a snow-storm like that! A stage snow-storm is the kind of snow-storm that would follow you upstairs and want to come into bed with you.

Another curious thing about these stage snow-storms is that the moon is always shining brightly through the whole of them. And it shines only on the heroine, and it follows her about just like the snow does.

Nobody fully understands what a wonderful work of nature the moon is except people acquainted with the stage. Astronomy teaches you something about the moon, but you learn a good deal more from a few visits to a theater. You will find from

the latter that the moon only shines on heroes and heroines, with perhaps an occasional beam on the comic man : it always goes out when it sees the villain coming.

It is surprising, too, how quickly the moon can go out on the stage. At one moment it is riding in full radiance in the midst of a cloudless sky, and the next instant it is gone ! Just as though it had been turned off at a meter. It makes you quite giddy at first until you get used to it.

The stage heroine is inclined to thoughtfulness rather than gayety.

In her cheerful moments the stage heroine thinks she sees the spirit of her mother, or the ghost of her father, or she dreams of her dead baby.

But this is only in her very merry moods. As a rule, she is too much occupied with weeping to have time for frivolous reflections.

She has a great flow of language and a wonderful gift of metaphor and simile—more forcible than elegant—and this might be rather trying in a wife under ordinary circumstances. But as the hero is generally sentenced to ten years' penal servitude on his wedding-morn, he escapes for a period from a danger that might well appall a less fortunate bridegroom.

Sometimes the stage heroine has a brother, and if so he is sure to be mistaken for her lover. We never came across a brother and sister in real life who ever gave the most suspicious person any grounds for mistaking them for lovers ; but the

stage brother and sister are so affectionate that the error is excusable.

And when the mistake does occur and the husband comes in suddenly and finds them kissing and raves she doesn't turn round and say :

“ Why, you silly cuckoo, it's only my brother.”

That would be simple and sensible, and would not suit the stage heroine at all. No ; she does all in her power to make everybody believe it is true, so that she can suffer in silence.

She does so love to suffer.

Marriage is undoubtedly a failure in the case of the stage heroine.

If the stage heroine were well advised she would remain single. Her husband means well. He is decidedly affectionate. But he is unfortunate and inexperienced in worldly affairs. Things come right for him at the end of the play, it is true ; but we would not recommend the heroine to place too much reliance upon the continuance of this happy state of affairs. From what we have seen of her husband and his business capabilities during the five acts preceding, we are inclined to doubt the possibility of his being anything but unfortunate to the end of his career.

True, he has at last got his “ rights ” (which he would never have lost had he had a head instead of a sentimental bladder on his shoulders), the villain is handcuffed, and he and the heroine have settled down comfortably next door to the comic man.

But this heavenly existence will never last. The

stage hero was built for trouble, and he will be in it again in another month, you bet. They'll get up another mortgage for him on the "estates;" and he won't know, bless you, whether he really did sign it or whether he didn't, and out he will go.

And he'll slop his name about to documents without ever looking to see what he's doing, and be let in for Lord knows what; and another wife will turn up for him that he had married when a boy and forgotten all about.

And the next corpse that comes to the village he'll get mixed up with—sure to—and have it laid to his door, and there'll be all the old business over again.

No, our advice to the stage heroine is to get rid of the hero as soon as possible, marry the villain, and go and live abroad somewhere where the comic man won't come fooling around.

She will be much happier.

THE COMIC MAN.

HE follows the hero all over the world. This is rough on the hero.

What makes him so gone on the hero is that when they were boys together the hero used to knock him down and kick him. The comic man remembers this with a glow of pride when he is grown up, and it makes him love the hero and determine to devote his life to him.

He is a man of humble station—the comic man. The village blacksmith or a peddler. You never see a rich or aristocratic comic man on the stage. You can have your choice on the stage; you can be funny and of lowly origin, or you can be well-to-do and without any sense of humor. Peers and policemen are the people most utterly devoid of humor on the stage.

The chief duty of the comic man's life is to make love to servant-girls, and they slap his face; but it does not discourage him; he seems to be more smitten by them than ever.

The comic man is happy under any fate, and he says funny things at funerals and when the bailiffs are in the house or the hero is waiting to be hanged.

This sort of man is rather trying in real life. In real life such a man would probably be slaughtered to death and buried at an early period of his career, but on the stage they put up with him.

He is very good, is the comic man. He can't bear villainy. To thwart villainy is his life's ambition, and in this noble object fortune backs him up grandly. Bad people come and commit their murders and thefts right under his nose, so that he can denounce them in the last act.

They never see him there standing close beside them, while they are performing these fearful crimes.

It is marvelous how short-sighted people on the stage are. We always thought that the young lady in real life was moderately good at not seeing folks she did not want to when they were standing straight in front of her, but her affliction in this direction is as nothing compared with that of her brothers and sisters on the stage.

These unfortunate people come into rooms where there are crowds of people about—people that it is most important that they should see, and owing to not seeing whom they get themselves into fearful trouble, and they never notice any of them. They talk to somebody opposite, and they can't see a third person that is standing bang between the two of them.

You might fancy they wore blinkers.

Then, again, their hearing is so terribly weak. It really ought to be seen to. People talk and chatter

at the very top of their voices close behind them, and they never hear a word—don't know anybody's there, even. After it has been going on for half an hour, and the people "up stage" have made themselves hoarse with shouting, and somebody has been boisterously murdered and all the furniture upset, then the people "down stage" "think they hear a noise."

The comic man always rows with his wife if he is married or with his sweetheart if he is not married. They quarrel all day long. It must be a trying life, you would think, but they appear to like it.

How the comic man lives and supports his wife (she looks as if it wanted something to support her, too) and family is always a mystery to us. As we have said, he is not a rich man and he never seems to earn any money. Sometimes he keeps a shop, and in the way he manages business it must be an expensive thing to keep, for he never charges anybody for anything, he is so generous. All his customers seem to be people more or less in trouble, and he can't find it in his heart to ask them to pay for their goods under such distressing circumstances.

He stuffs their basket full with twice as much as they came to buy, pushes their money back into their hands, and wipes away a tear.

Why doesn't a comic man come and set up a grocery store in our neighborhood?

When the shop does not prove sufficiently profitable (as under the above-explained method sometimes happens to be the case) the comic man's wife

seeks to add to the income by taking in lodgers. This is a bad move on her part, for it always ends in the lodgers taking her in. The hero and heroine, who seem to have been waiting for something of the sort, immediately come and take possession of the whole house.

Of course the comic man could not think of charging for mere board and lodging the man who knocked him down when they were boys together! Besides, was not the heroine (now the hero's wife) the sweetest and the blithest girl in all the village of Deepdale? (They must have been a gloomy band, the others!) How can any one with a human heart beneath his bosom suggest that people like that should pay for their rest and washing? The comic man is shocked at his wife for even thinking of such a thing, and the end of it is that Mr. and Mrs. Hero live there for the rest of the play rent free; coals, soap, candles, and hair-oil for the child being provided for them on the same terms.

The hero raises vague and feeble objections to this arrangement now and again. He says he will not hear of such a thing, that he will stay no longer to be a burden upon these honest folk, but will go forth unto the roadside and there starve. The comic man has awful work with him, but wins at last and persuades the noble fellow to stop on and give the place another trial.

When, a morning or so after witnessing one of these beautiful scenes, our own landlady knocks at our door and creates a disturbance over a paltry

matter of three or four weeks' rent, and says she'll have her money or out we go that very day, and drifts slowly away down toward the kitchen, abusing us in a rising voice as she descends, then we think of these things and grow sad.

It is the example of the people round him that makes the comic man so generous. Everybody is generous on the stage. They are giving away their purses all day long; that is the regulation "tip" on the stage—one's purse. The moment you hear a tale of woe, you grab it out of your pocket, slap it in to the woe-er's palm, grip his hand, dash away a tear, and exit; you don't even leave yourself a 'bus fare home. You walk back quickly and get another purse.

Middle-class people and others on the stage who are short of purses have to content themselves with throwing about rolls of bank-notes and tipping servants with five-pound checks. Very stingy people on the stage have been known to be so cussed mean as to give away mere sovereigns.

But they are generally only villains or lords that descend to this sort of thing. Respectable stage folk never offer anything less than a purse.

The recipient is very grateful on receiving the purse (he never looks inside) and thinks that Heaven ought to reward the donor. They get a lot of work out of Heaven on the stage. Heaven does all the odd jobs for them that they don't want to go to the trouble and expense of doing for themselves. Heaven's chief duty on the stage is to see to the re-

payment of all those sums of money that are given or lent to the good people. It is generally requested to do this to the tune of a "thousand-fold"—an exorbitant rate when you come to think of it.

Heaven is also expected to take care that the villain gets properly cursed, and to fill up its spare time by bringing misfortune upon the local landlord. It has to avenge everybody and to help all the good people whenever they are in trouble. And they keep it going in this direction.

And when the hero leaves for prison Heaven has to take care of his wife and child till he comes out; and if this isn't a handful for it, we don't know what would be!

Heaven on the stage is always on the side of the hero and heroine and against the police.

Occasionally, of late years, the comic man has been a bad man, but you can't hate him for it. What if he does ruin the hero and rob the heroine and help to murder the good old man? He does it all in such a genial, light-hearted spirit that it is not in one's heart to feel angry with him. It is the way in which a thing is done that makes all the difference.

Besides, he can always round on his pal, the serious villain, at the end, and that makes it all right.

The comic man is not a sportsman. If he goes out shooting, we know that when he returns we shall hear that he has shot the dog. If he takes his girl out on the river he upsets her (literally we mean). The comic man never goes out for a day's pleasure without coming home a wreck.

If he merely goes to tea with his girl at her mother's, he swallows a muffin and chokes himself.

The comic man is not happy in his married life, nor does it seem to us that he goes the right way to be so. He calls his wife "his old Dutch clock," "the old geyser," and such like terms of endearment, and addresses her with such remarks as "Ah, you old cat," "You ugly old nutmeg grater," "You orangamatang, you!" etc., etc.

Well, you know that is not the way to make things pleasant about a house.

Still, with all his faults we like the comic man. He is not always in trouble and he does not make long speeches.

Let us bless him.

THE LAWYER.

HE is very old, and very long, and very thin. He has white hair. He dresses in the costume of the last generation but seven. He has bushy eyebrows and is clean shaven. His chin itches considerably, so that he has to be always scratching it. His favorite remark is "Ah!"

In real life we have heard of young solicitors, of foppish solicitors, of short solicitors; but on the stage they are always very thin and very old. The youngest stage solicitor we ever remember to have seen looked about sixty—the oldest about a hundred and forty-five.

By the bye, it is never very safe to judge people's ages on the stage by their personal appearance. We have known old ladies who looked seventy, if they were a day, turn out to be the mothers of boys of fourteen, while the middle-aged husband of the young wife generally gives one the idea of ninety.

Again, what appears at first sight to be a comfortable-looking and eminently respectable elderly lady is often discovered to be, in reality, a giddy, girlish, and inexperienced young thing, the pride of the village or the darling of the regiment.

So, too, an exceptionally stout and short-winded old gentleman, who looks as if he had been living too well and taking too little exercise for the last forty-five years, is not the heavy father, as you might imagine if you judged from mere external evidence, but a wild, reckless boy.

You would not think so to look at him, but his only faults are that he is so young and light-headed. There is good in him, however, and he will no doubt be steady enough when he grows up. All the young men of the neighborhood worship him and the girls love him.

"Here he comes," they say; "dear, dear old Jack—Jack, the darling boy—the headstrong youth—Jack, the leader of our juvenile sports—Jack, whose childish innocence wins all hearts. Three cheers for dancing, bright-eyed Jack!"

On the other hand, ladies with the complexion of eighteen are, you learn as the story progresses, quite elderly women, the mothers of middle-aged heroes.

The experienced observer of stage-land never jumps to conclusions from what he sees. He waits till he is told things.

The stage lawyer never has any office of his own. He transacts all his business at his clients' houses. He will travel hundreds of miles to tell them the most trivial piece of legal information.

It never occurs to him how much simpler it would be to write a letter. The item for "traveling expenses" in his bill of costs must be something enormous.

There are two moments in the course of his client's career that the stage lawyer particularly enjoys. The first is when the client comes unexpectedly into a fortune; the second when he unexpectedly loses it.

In the former case, upon learning the good news the stage lawyer at once leaves his business and hurries off to the other end of the kingdom to bear the glad tidings. He arrives at the humble domicile of the beneficiary in question, sends up his card, and is ushered into the front parlor. He enters mysteriously and sits left—client sits right. An ordinary, common lawyer would come to the point at once, state the matter in a plain, business-like way, and trust that he might have the pleasure of representing, etc., etc.; but such simple methods are not those of the stage lawyer. He looks at the client and says:

“You had a father.”

The client starts. How on earth did this calm, thin, keen-eyed old man in black know that he had a father? He shuffles and stammers, but the quiet, impenetrable lawyer fixes his cold, glassy eye on him, and he is helpless. Subterfuge, he feels, is useless, and amazed, bewildered at the knowledge of his most private affairs possessed by his strange visitor, he admits the fact: he had a father.

The lawyer smiles with a quiet smile of triumph and scratches his chin.

“You had a mother, too, if I am informed correctly,” he continues.

It is idle attempting to escape this man's supernatural acuteness, and the client owns up to having had a mother also.

From this the lawyer goes on to communicate to the client, as a great secret, the whole of his (the client's) history from his cradle upward, and also the history of his nearer relatives, and in less than half an hour from the old man's entrance, or say forty minutes at the outside, the client almost knows what the business is about.

On the other occasion, when the client has lost his fortune, the stage lawyer is even still happier. He comes down himself to tell the misfortune (he would not miss the job for worlds), and he takes care to choose the most unpropitious moment possible for breaking the news. On the eldest daughter's birthday, when there is a big party on, is his favorite time. He comes in about midnight and tells them just as they are going down to supper.

He has no idea of business hours, has the stage lawyer—to make the thing as unpleasant as possible seems to be his only anxiety.

If he cannot work it for a birthday, then he waits till a there's wedding on, and gets up early in the morning on purpose to run down and spoil the show. To enter among a crowd of happy, joyous fellow-creatures and leave them utterly crushed and miserable is the stage lawyer's hobby.

The stage lawyer is a very talkative gentleman. He regards the telling of his client's most private affairs to every stranger that he meets as part of

his professional duties. A good gossip with a few chance acquaintances about the family secrets of his employers is food and drink for the stage lawyer.

They all go about telling their own and their friends' secrets to perfect strangers on the stage. Whenever two people have five minutes to spare on the stage they tell each other the story of their lives. "Sit down and I will tell you the story of my life" is the stage equivalent for the "Come and have a drink" of the outside world.

The good stage lawyer has generally nursed the heroine on his knee when a baby (when she was a baby, we mean)—when she was only so high. It seems to have been a part of his professional duties. The good stage lawyer also kisses all the pretty girls in the play and is expected to chuck the housemaid under the chin. It is good to be a good stage lawyer.

The good stage lawyer also wipes away a tear when sad things happen; and he turns away to do this and blows his nose, and says he thinks he has a fly in his eye. This touching trait in his character is always held in great esteem by the audience and is much applauded.

The good stage lawyer is never by any chance a married man. (Few good men are, so we gather from our married lady friends.) He loved in early life the heroine's mother. That "sainted woman" (tear and nose business) died and is now among the angels—the gentleman who did marry her, by the bye, is not quite so sure about this latter point, but the lawyer is fixed on the idea.

In stage literature of a frivolous nature the lawyer is a very different individual. In comedy he is young, he possesses chambers, and he is married (there is no doubt about this latter fact); and his wife and his mother-in-law spend most of the day in his office and make the dull old place quite lively for him.

He only has one client. She is a nice lady and affable, but her antecedents are doubtful, and she seems to be no better than she ought to be—possibly worse. But anyhow she is the sole business that the poor fellow has—is, in fact, his only source of income, and might, one would think, under such circumstances be accorded a welcome by his family. But his wife and his mother-in-law, on the contrary, take a violent dislike to her, and the lawyer has to put her in the coal-scuttle or lock her up in the safe whenever he hears either of these female relatives of his coming up the stairs.

We should not care to be the client of a farcical comedy stage lawyer. Legal transactions are trying to the nerves under the most favorable circumstances; conducted by a farcical stage lawyer, the business would be too exciting for us.

THE ADVENTURESS.

SHE sits on a table and smokes a cigarette. A cigarette on the stage is always the badge of infamy.

In real life the cigarette is usually the hall-mark of the particularly mild and harmless individual. It is the dissipation of the Y. M. C. A.; the innocent joy of the pure-hearted boy long ere the demoralizing influence of our vaunted civilization has dragged him down into the depths of the short clay.

But behind the cigarette on the stage lurks ever black-hearted villainy and abandoned womanhood.

The adventuress is generally of foreign extraction. They do not make bad women in England—the article is entirely of continental manufacture and has to be imported. She speaks English with a charming little French accent, and she makes up for this by speaking French with a good sound English one.

She seems a smart business woman, and she would probably get on very well if it were not for her friends and relations. Friends and relations are a trying class of people even in real life, as we all know, but the friends and relations of the stage adventuress are a particularly irritating lot. They never leave her; never does she get a day or an

hour off from them. Wherever she goes, there the whole tribe goes with her.

They all go with her in a body when she calls on her young man, and it is as much as she can do to persuade them to go into the next room, even for five minutes, and give her a chance. When she is married they come and live with her.

They know her dreadful secret and it keeps them in comfort for years. Knowing somebody's secret seems, on the stage, to be one of the most profitable and least exhausting professions going.

She is fond of married life, is the adventuress, and she goes in for it pretty extensively. She has husbands all over the globe, most of them in prison, but they escape and turn up in the last act and spoil all the poor girl's plans. That is so like husbands—no consideration, no thought for their poor wives.

They are not a prepossessing lot, either, those early husbands of hers. What she could have seen in them to induce her to marry them is indeed a mystery.

The adventuress dresses magnificently. Where she gets the money from we never could understand, for she and her companions are always more or less complaining of being "stone broke." Dressmakers must be a trusting people where she comes from.

The adventuress is like the proverbial cat as regards the number of lives she is possessed of. You never know when she is really dead. Most people like to die once and have done with it, but the adventuress, after once or twice trying it, seems to get

quite to like it, and goes on giving way to it, and then it grows upon her until she can't help herself, and it becomes a sort of craving with her.

This habit of hers is, however, a very trying one for her friends and husbands—it makes things so uncertain. Something ought to be done to break her of it. Her husbands, on hearing that she is dead, go into raptures and rush off and marry other people, and then just as they are starting off on their new honeymoon up she crops again, as fresh as paint. It is really most annoying.

For ourselves, were we the husband of a stage adventuress we should never, after what we have seen of the species, feel quite justified in believing her to be dead unless we had killed and buried her ourselves; and even then we should be more easy in our minds if we could arrange to sit on her grave for a week or so afterward. These women are so artful!

But it is not only the adventuress who will persist in coming to life again every time she is slaughtered. They all do it on the stage. They are all so unreliable in this respect. It must be most disheartening to the murderers.

And then, again, it is something extraordinary, when you come to think of it, what a tremendous amount of killing some of them can stand and still come up smiling in the next act, not a penny the worse for it. They get stabbed, and shot, and thrown over precipices thousands of feet high, and, bless you, it does them good—it is like a tonic to them.

As for the young man that is coming home to see his girl, you simply can't kill him. Achilles was a summer rose compared with him. Nature and mankind have not sufficient materials in hand as yet to kill that man. Science has but the strength of a puling babe against his invulnerability. You can waste your time on earthquakes and shipwrecks, volcanic eruptions, floods, explosions, railway accidents, and such like sort of things, if you are foolish enough to do so ; but it is no good your imagining that anything of the kind can hurt him, because it can't.

There will be thousands of people killed, thousands in each instance, but one human being will always escape, and that one human being will be the stage young man who is coming home to see his girl.

He is forever being reported as dead, but it always turns out to be another fellow who was like him or who had on his (the young man's) hat. He is bound to be out of it, whoever else may be in.

"If I had been at my post that day," he explains to his sobbing mother, "I should have been blown up, but the Providence that watches over good men had ordained that I should be laying blind drunk in Blogg's saloon at the time the explosion took place, and so the other engineer, who had been doing my work when it was his turn to be off, was killed along with the whole of the crew."

"Ah, thank Heaven, thank Heaven for that!" ejaculates the pious old lady, and the comic man is

so overcome with devout joy that he has to relieve his overstrained heart by drawing his young woman on one side and grossly insulting her.

All attempts to kill this young man ought really to be given up now. The job has been tried over and over again by villains and bad people of all kinds, but no one has ever succeeded. There has been an amount of energy and ingenuity expended in seeking to lay up that one man which, properly utilized, might have finished off ten million ordinary mortals. It is sad to think of so much wasted effort.

He, the young man coming home to see his girl, need never take an insurance ticket or even buy a *Tit Bits*. It would be needless expenditure in his case.

On the other hand, and to make matters equal, as it were, there are some stage people so delicate that it is next door to impossible to keep them alive.

The inconvenient husband is a most pathetic example of this. Medical science is powerless to save that man when the last act comes round; indeed, we doubt whether medical science, in its present state of development, could even tell what is the matter with him or why he dies at all. He looks healthy and robust enough and nobody touches him, yet down he drops, without a word of warning, stone-dead, in the middle of the floor—he always dies in the middle of the floor. Some folks like to die in bed, but stage people don't. They like to die on the floor. We all have our different tastes.

The adventuress herself is another person who dies with remarkable ease. We suppose in her case it is being so used to it that makes her so quick and clever at it. There is no lingering illness and doctors' bills and upsetting of the whole household arrangements about her method. One walk round the stage and the thing is done.

All bad characters die quickly on the stage. Good characters take a long time over it, and have a sofa down in the drawing-room to do it on, and have sobbing relatives and good old doctors fooling around them, and can smile and forgive everybody. Bad stage characters have to do the whole job, dying speech and all, in about ten seconds, and do it with all their clothes on into the bargain, which must make it most uncomfortable.

It is repentance that kills off the bad people in plays. They always repent, and the moment they repent they die. Repentance on the stage seems to be one of the most dangerous things a man can be taken with. Our advice to stage wicked people would undoubtedly be, "Never repent. If you value your life, don't repent. It always means sudden death!"

To return to our adventuress. She is by no means a bad woman. There is much good in her. This is more than proved by the fact that she learns to love the hero before she dies; for no one but a really good woman capable of extraordinary patience and gentleness could ever, we are convinced, grow to feel any other sentiment for that irritating ass than a desire to throw bricks at him.

The stage adventuress would be a much better woman, too, if it were not for the heroine. The adventuress makes the most complete arrangements for being noble and self-sacrificing—that is, for going away and never coming back, and is just about to carry them out, when the heroine, who has a perfect genius for being in the wrong place at the right time, comes in and spoils it all. No stage adventuress can be good while the heroine is about. The sight of the heroine rouses every bad feeling in her breast.

We can sympathize with her in this respect. The heroine often affects ourselves in precisely the same way.

There is a good deal to be said in favor of the adventuress. True, she possesses rather too much sarcasm and repartee to make things quite agreeable round the domestic hearth, and when she has got all her clothes on there is not much room left in the place for anybody else; but taken on the whole she is decidedly attractive. She has grit and go in her. She is alive. She can do something to help herself besides calling for "George."

She has not got a stage child—if she ever had one, she has left it on somebody else's doorstep, which, presuming there was no water handy to drown it in, seems to be about the most sensible thing she could have done with it. She is not oppressively good.

She never wants to be "unhanded" or "let to pass."

She is not always being shocked or insulted by people telling her that they love her ; she does not seem to mind it if they do. She is not always fainting, and crying, and sobbing, and wailing, and moaning, like the good people in the play are.

Oh, they do have an unhappy time of it—the good people in plays! Then she is the only person in the piece who can sit on the comic man.

We sometimes think it would be a fortunate thing—for him—if they allowed her to marry and settle down quietly with the hero. She might make a man of him in time.

THE SERVANT-GIRL.

THERE are two types of servant-girl to be met with on the stage. This is an unusual allowance for one profession.

There is the lodging-house slavey. She has a good heart and a smutty face and is always dressed according to the latest fashion in scarecrows. Her leading occupation is the cleaning of boots. She cleans boots all over the house, at all hours of the day. She comes and sits down on the hero's breakfast-table and cleans them over the poor fellow's food. She comes into the drawing-room cleaning boots.

She has her own method of cleaning them, too. She rubs off the mud, puts on the blacking, and polishes up all with the same brush. They take an enormous amount of polishing. She seems to do nothing else all day long but walk about shining one boot, and she breathes on it and rubs it till you wonder there is any leather left, yet it never seems to get any brighter, nor, indeed, can you expect it to, for when you look close you see it is a patent-leather boot that she has been throwing herself away upon all this time.

Somebody has been having a lark with the poor girl.

The lodging-house slavey brushes her hair with the boot brush and blacks the end of her nose with it.

We were acquainted with a lodging-house slavey once—a real one, we mean. She was the hand-maiden at a house in Bloomsbury where we once hung out. She was untidy in her dress, it is true, but she had not quite that castaway and gone-to-sleep-in-a-dust-bin appearance that we, an earnest student of the drama, felt she ought to present, and we questioned her one day on the subject.

“How is it, Sophronia,” we said, “that you distantly resemble a human being instead of giving one the idea of an animated rag-shop? Don’t you ever polish your nose with the blacking-brush, or rub coal into your head, or wash your face in treacle, or put skewers into your hair, or anything of that sort, like they do on the stage?”

She said: “Lord love you, what should I want to go and be a bally idiot like that for?”

And we have not liked to put the question elsewhere since then.

The other type of servant-girl on the stage—the villa servant-girl—is a very different personage. She is a fetching little thing, dresses bewitchingly, and is always clean. Her duties are to dust the legs of the chairs in the drawing-room. That is the only work she ever has to do, but it must be confessed she does that thoroughly. She never comes into

the room without dusting the legs of these chairs, and she dusts them again before she goes out.

If anything ought to be free from dust in a stage house, it should be the legs of the drawing-room chairs.

She is going to marry the man-servant, is the stage servant-girl, as soon as they have saved up sufficient out of their wages to buy a hotel. They think they will like to keep a hotel. They don't understand a bit about the business, which we believe is a complicated one, but this does not trouble them in the least.

They quarrel a good deal over their love-making, do the stage servant-girl and her young man, and they always come into the drawing-room to do it. They have got the kitchen, and there is the garden (with a fountain and mountains in the background—you can see it through the window), but no! no place in or about the house is good enough for them to quarrel in except the drawing-room. They quarrel there so vigorously that it even interferes with the dusting of the chair-legs.

She ought not to be long in saving up sufficient to marry on, for the generosity of people on the stage to the servants there makes one seriously consider the advisability of ignoring the unremunerative professions of ordinary life and starting a new and more promising career as a stage servant.

No one ever dreams of tipping the stage servant with less than a sovereign when they ask her if her mistress is at home or give her a letter to post, and

there is quite a rush at the end of the piece to stuff five-pound notes into her hand. The good old man gives her ten.

The stage servant is very impudent to her mistress, and the master—he falls in love with her and it does upset the house so.

Sometimes the servant-girl is good and faithful, and then she is Irish. All good servant-girls on the stage are Irish.

All the male visitors are expected to kiss the stage servant-girl when they come into the house, and to dig her in the ribs and to say: "Do you know, Jane, I think you're an uncommonly nice girl—click." They always say this, and she likes it.

Many years ago, when we were young, we thought we would see if things were the same off the stage, and the next time we called at a certain friend's house we tried this business on.

She wasn't quite so dazzlingly beautiful as they are on the stage, but we passed that. She showed us up into the drawing-room, and then said she would go and tell her mistress we were there.

We felt this was the time to begin. We skipped between her and the door. We held our hat in front of us, cocked our head on one side, and said: "Don't go! don't go!"

The girl seemed alarmed. We began to get a little nervous ourselves, but we had begun it and we meant to go through with it.

We said, "Do you know, Jane" (her name wasn't Jane, but that wasn't our fault), "do you know,

Jane, I think you're an uncommonly nice girl," and we said "click," and dug her in the ribs with our elbow, and then chucked her under the chin. The whole thing seemed to fall flat. There was nobody there to laugh or applaud. We wished we hadn't done it. It seemed stupid when you came to think of it. We began to feel frightened. The business wasn't going as we expected; but we screwed up our courage and went on.

We put on the customary expression of comic imbecility and beckoned the girl to us. We have never seen this fail on the stage.

But this girl seemed made wrong. She got behind the sofa and screamed "Help!"

We have never known them to do this on the stage, and it threw us out in our plans. We did not know exactly what to do. We regretted that we had ever begun this job and heartily wished ourselves out of it. But it appeared foolish to pause then, when we were more than half-way through, and we made a rush to get it over.

We chivvied the girl round the sofa and caught her near the door and kissed her. She scratched our face, yelled police, murder, and fire, and fled from the room.

Our friend came in almost immediately. He said: "I say, J., old man, are you drunk?"

We told him no, that we were only a student of the drama. His wife then entered in a towering passion. She didn't ask us if we were drunk. She said:

"How dare you come here in this state!"

We endeavored unsuccessfully to induce her to believe that we were sober, and we explained that our course of conduct was what was always pursued on the stage.

She said she didn't care what was done on the stage, it wasn't going to be pursued in her house; and that if her husband's friends couldn't behave as gentlemen they had better stop away.

The following morning we received a letter from a firm of solicitors in Lincoln's Inn with reference, so they put it, to the brutal and unprovoked assault committed by us on the previous afternoon upon the person of their client, Miss Matilda Hemmings. The letter stated that we had punched Miss Hemmings in the side, struck her under the chin, and afterward, seizing her as she was leaving the room, proceeded to commit a gross assault, into the particulars of which it was needless for them to enter at greater length.

It added that if we were prepared to render an ample written apology and to pay £50 compensation, they would advise their client, Miss Matilda Hemmings, to allow the matter to drop; otherwise criminal proceedings would at once be commenced against us.

We took the letter to our own solicitors and explained the circumstances to them. They said it seemed to be a very sad case, but advised us to pay the £50, and we borrowed the money and did so.

Since then we have lost faith, somehow, in the British drama as a guide to the conduct of life.

THE CHILD.

It is nice and quiet and it talks prettily.

We have come across real infants now and then in the course of visits to married friends; they have been brought to us from outlying parts of the house and introduced to us for our edification; and we have found them gritty and sticky. Their boots have usually been muddy, and they have wiped them up against our new trousers. And their hair has suggested the idea that they have been standing on their heads in the dust-bin.

And they have talked to us—but not prettily, not at all—rather rude we should call it.

But the stage child is very different. It is clean and tidy. You can touch it anywhere and nothing comes off. Its face glows with soap and water. From the appearance of its hands it is evident that mud-pies and tar are joys unknown to it. As for its hair, there is something uncanny about its smoothness and respectability. Even its boot-laces are done up.

We have never seen anything like the stage child outside a theater excepting one—that was on the pavement in front of a tailor's shop in Tottenham

Court Road. He stood on a bit of round wood, and it was fifteen and nine, his style.

We thought in our ignorance prior to this that there could not be anything in the world like the stage child, but you see we were mistaken.

The stage child is affectionate to its parents and its nurse, and is respectful in its demeanor toward those whom Providence has placed in authority over it; and so far it is certainly much to be preferred to the real article. It speaks of its male and female progenitors as "dear, dear papa" and "dear, dear mamma," and it refers to its nurse as "darling nursey." We are connected with a youthful child ourselves—a real one—a nephew. He alludes to his father (when his father is not present) as "the old man," and always calls the nurse "old nut-crackers." Why cannot they make real children who say "dear, dear mamma" and "dear, dear papa?"

The stage child is much superior to the live infant in every way. The stage child does not go ram-paging about a house and screeching and yelling till nobody knows whether they are on their heads or their heels.

A stage child does not get up at five o'clock in the morning to practice playing on a penny whistle. A stage child never wants a bicycle and drives you mad about it. A stage child does not ask twenty complicated questions a minute about things that you don't understand, and then wind up by asking why you don't seem to know anything, and why

wouldn't anybody teach you anything when you were a little boy.

The stage child does not wear a hole in the seat of its knickerbockers and have to have a patch let in. The stage child comes downstairs on its feet.

The stage child never brings home six other children to play at horses in the front garden, and then wants to know if they can all come in to tea. The stage child never has the whooping-cough, and the measles, and every other disease that it can lay its hands on, and be laid up with them one after the other and turn the house upside down.

The stage child's department in the scheme of life is to harrow up its mother's feelings by ill-timed and uncalled-for questions about its father. It always wants to know, before a roomful of people, where "dear papa" is, and why he has left dear mamma; when, as all the guests know, the poor man is doing his two years' hard or waiting to be hanged. It makes everybody so uncomfortable.

It is always harrowing up somebody—the stage child; it really ought not to be left about as it is. When it has done upsetting its mother it fishes out some broken-hearted maid, who has just been cruelly severed forever from her lover, and asks her in a high falsetto voice why she doesn't get married, and prattles to her about love, and domestic bliss, and young men, and any other subject it can think of particularly calculated to lacerate the poor girl's heart until her brain nearly gives way.

After that it runs amuck up and down the whole play and makes everybody sit up all round. It asks eminently respectable old maids if they wouldn't like to have a baby; and it wants to know why bald-headed old men have left off wearing hair, and why other old gentlemen have red noses and if they were always that color.

In some plays it so happens that the less said about the origin and source of the stage child the better; and in such cases nothing will appear so important to that contrary brat as to know, in the middle of an evening-party, who its father was!

Everybody loves the stage child. They catch it up in their bosoms every other minute and weep over it. They take it in turns to do this.

Nobody—on the stage, we mean—ever has enough of the stage child. Nobody ever tells the stage child to “shut up” or to “get out of this.” Nobody ever clumps the stage child over the head.

When the real child goes to the theater it must notice these things and wish it were a stage child.

The stage child is much admired by the audience. Its pathos makes them weep; its tragedy thrills them; its declamation—as for instance when it takes the center of the stage and says it will kill the wicked man, and the police, and everybody who hurts its mar—stirs them like a trumpet note; and its light comedy is generally held to be the most truly humorous thing in the whole range of dramatic art.

But there are some people so stangely consituted

that they do not appreciate the stage child ; they do not comprehend its uses ; they do not understand its beauties. We should not be angry with them. We should rather pity them.

We ourselves had a friend once who suffered from this misfortune. He was a married man, and Providence had been very gracious, very good to him : he had been blessed with eleven children, and they were all growing up well and strong.

The " baby " was eleven weeks old, and then came the twins, who were getting on for fifteen months and were cutting their double teeth nicely. The youngest girl was three ; there were five boys aged seven, eight, nine, ten, and twelve respectively—good enough lads, but—well, there, boys will be boys, you know ; we were just the same ourselves when we were young. The two eldest were both very pleasant girls, as their mother said ; the only pity was that they would quarrel so with each other.

We never knew a healthier set of boys and girls. They were so full of energy and dash.

Our friend was very much out of sorts one evening when we called on him. It was holiday-time and wet weather. He had been at home all day, and so had all the children. He was telling his wife when we entered the room that if the holidays were to last much longer and those twins did not hurry up and get their teeth quickly, he should have to go away and join the County Council. He could not stand the racket.

His wife said she could not see what he had to

complain of. She was sure better-hearted children no man could have.

Our friend said he didn't care a straw about their hearts. It was their legs and arms and lungs that were driving him crazy.

He also said that he would go out with us and get away from it for a bit, or he should go mad.

He proposed a theater, and we accordingly made our way toward the Strand. Our friend, in closing the door behind him, said he could not tell us what a relief it was to get away from those children. He said he loved children very much indeed, but that it was a mistake to have too much of anything, however much you liked it, and that he had come to the conclusion that twenty-two hours a day of them was enough for any one.

He said he did not want to see another child or hear another child until he got home. He wanted to forget that there were such things as children in the world.

We got up to the Strand and dropped into the first theater we came to. The curtain went up, and on the stage was a small child standing in its night-shirt and screaming for its mother.

Our friend looked, said one word and bolted, and we followed.

We went a little further and dropped into another theater.

Here there were two children on the stage. Some grown-up people were standing round them listening, in respectful attitudes, while the children talked. They appeared to be *lecturing* about something.

Again we fled, swearing, and made our way to a third theater. They were all children there. It was somebody or other's Children's Company performing an opera, or pantomime, or something of that sort.

Our friend said he would not venture into another theater. He said he had heard there were places called music-halls, and he begged us to take him to one of these and not to tell his wife.

We inquired of a policeman and found that there really were such places, and we took him into one.

The first thing we saw were two little boys doing tricks on a horizontal bar.

Our friend was about to repeat his customary programme of flying and cursing, but we restrained him. We assured him that he would really see a grown-up person if he waited a bit, so he sat out the boys and also their little sister on a bicycle and waited for the next item.

It turned out to be an infant phenomenon who sang and danced in fourteen different costumes, and we once more fled.

Our friend said he could not go home in the state he was then; he felt sure he should kill the twins if he did. He pondered for awhile, and then he thought he would go and hear some music. He said he thought a little music would soothe and ennoble him—make him feel more like a Christian than he did at that precise moment.

We were near St. James' Hall, so we went in there.

The hall was densely crowded, and we had great difficulty in forcing our way to our seats. We reached them at length, and then turned our eyes toward the orchestra.

“The marvelous boy pianist—only ten years old!” was giving a recital.

Then our friend rose and said he thought he would give it up and go home.

We asked him if he would like to try any other place of amusement, but he said “No.” He said that when you came to think of it, it seemed a waste of money for a man with eleven children of his own to go about to places of entertainment nowadays.

THE COMIC LOVERS.

Oh, they are funny ! The comic lovers' mission in life is to serve as a sort of "relief" to the misery caused the audience by the other characters in the play ; and all that is wanted now is something that will be a relief to the comic lovers.

They have nothing to do with the play, but they come on immediately after anything very sad has happened and make love. This is why we watch sad scenes on the stage with such patience. We are not eager for them to be got over. Maybe they are very uninteresting scenes, as well as sad ones, and they make us yawn ; but we have no desire to see them hurried through. The longer they take the better pleased we are : we know that when they are finished the comic lovers will come on.

They are always very rude to each other, the comic lovers. Everybody is more or less rude and insulting to everybody else on the stage ; they call it repartee there ! We tried the effect of a little stage "repartee" once upon some people in real life, and we wished we hadn't afterward. It was too subtle for them. They summoned us before a magistrate for "using language calculated to cause

a breach of the peace." We were fined £2 and costs!

They are more lenient to "wit and humor" on the stage, and know how to encourage the art of vituperation. But the comic lovers carry the practice almost to excess. They are more than rude—they are abusive. They insult each other from morning to night. What their married life will be like we shudder to think!

In the various slanging matches and bullyragging competitions which form their courtship it is always the maiden that is most successful. Against her merry flow of invective and her girlish wealth of offensive personalities the insolence and abuse of her boyish adorer cannot stand for one moment.

To give an idea of how the comic lovers woo, we perhaps cannot do better than subjoin the following brief example:

SCENE: *Main thoroughfare in populous district of London. Time: Noon. Not a soul to be seen anywhere.*

Enter comic loveress R., walking in the middle of the road.

Enter comic lover L., also walking in the middle of the road.

They neither see the other until they bump against each other in the center.

HE. Why, Jane! Who'd a' thought o' meeting you here!

SHE. You evidently didn't—stoopid!

HE. Halloo! got out o' bed the wrong side again?

I say, Jane, if you go on like that you'll never get a man to marry you.

SHE. So I thought when I engaged myself to you.

HE. Oh! come, Jane, don't be hard.

SHE. Well, one of us must be hard. You're soft enough.

HE. Yes, I shouldn't want to marry you if I weren't. Ha! ha! ha!

SHE. Oh, you gibbering idiot! (*Said archly.*)

HE. So glad I am. We shall make a capital match (*attempts to kiss her*).

SHE (*slipping away*). Yes, and you'll find I'm a match that can strike (*fetches him a violent blow over the side of the head*).

HE (*holding his jaw—in a literal sense, we mean*). I can't help feeling smitten by her.

SHE. Yes, I'm a bit of a spanker, ain't I?

HE. Spanker. I call you a regular stunner. You've nearly made me silly.

SHE (*laughing playfully*). No, nature did that for you, Joe, long ago.

HE. Ah, well, you've made me smart enough now, you boss-eyed old cow, you!

SHE. Cow! am I? Ah, I suppose that's what makes me so fond of a calf, you German sausage on legs! You——

HE. Go along. Your mother brought you up on sour milk.

SHE. Yah! They weaned you on thistles, didn't they?

And so on, with such like badinage do they hang about in the middle of that road, showering derision and contumely upon each other for full ten minutes, when, with one culminating burst of mutual abuse, they go off together fighting and the street is left once more deserted.

It is very curious, by the bye, how deserted all public places become whenever a stage character is about. It would seem as though ordinary citizens sought to avoid them. We have known a couple of stage villains to have Waterloo Bridge, Lancaster Place, and a bit of the Strand entirely to themselves for nearly a quarter of an hour on a summer's afternoon while they plotted a most diabolical outrage.

As for Trafalgar Square, the hero always chooses that spot when he wants to get away from the busy crowd and commune in solitude with his own bitter thoughts; and the good old lawyer leaves his office and goes there to discuss any very delicate business over which he particularly does not wish to be disturbed.

And they all make speeches there to an extent sufficient to have turned the hair of the late lamented Sir Charles Warren white with horror. But it is all right, because there is nobody near to hear them. As far as the eye can reach, not a living thing is to be seen. Northumberland Avenue, the Strand, and St. Martin's Lane are simply a wilderness. The only sign of life about is a 'bus at the top of Whitehall, and it appears to be blocked.

How it has managed to get blocked we cannot say. It has the whole road to itself, and is, in fact, itself the only traffic for miles round. Yet there it sticks for hours. The police make no attempt to move it on and the passengers seem quite contented.

The Thames Embankment is an even still more lonesome and desolate part. Wounded (stage) spirits fly from the haunts of men and, leaving the hard, cold world far, far behind them, go and die in peace on the Thames Embankment. And other wanderers, finding their skeletons afterward, bury them there and put up rude crosses over the graves to mark the spot.

The comic lovers are often very young, and when people on the stage are young they *are* young. He is supposed to be about sixteen and she is fifteen. But they both talk as if they were not more than seven.

In real life "boys" of sixteen know a thing or two, we have generally found. The average "boy" of sixteen nowadays usually smokes cavendish and does a little on the Stock Exchange or makes a book; and as for love! he has quite got over it by that age. On the stage, however, the new-born babe is not in it for innocence with the boy lover of sixteen.

So, too, with the maiden. Most girls of fifteen off the stage, so our experience goes, know as much as there is any actual necessity for them to know, Mr. Gilbert notwithstanding; but when we see a young lady of fifteen on the stage we wonder where her cradle is.

The comic lovers do not have the facilities for love-making that the hero and heroine do. The hero and heroine have big rooms to make love in, with a fire and plenty of easy-chairs, so that they can sit about in picturesque attitudes and do it comfortably. Or if they want to do it out of doors they have a ruined abbey, with a big stone seat in the center, and moonlight.

The comic lovers, on the other hand, have to do it standing up all the time, in busy streets, or in cheerless-looking and curiously narrow rooms in which there is no furniture whatever and no fire.

And there is always a tremendous row going on in the house when the comic lovers are making love. Somebody always seems to be putting up pictures, in the next room, and putting them up boisterously, too, so that the comic lovers have to shout at each other.

THE PEASANTS.

THEY are so clean. We have seen peasantry off the stage, and it has presented an untidy—occasionally a disreputable and unwashed—appearance; but the stage peasant seems to spend all his wages on soap and hair-oil.

They are always round the corner—or rather round the two corners—and they come on in a couple of streams and meet in the center; and when they are in their proper position they smile.

There is nothing like the stage peasants' smile in this world—nothing so perfectly inane, so calmly imbecile.

They are so happy. They don't look it, but we know they are because they say so. If you don't believe them, they dance three steps to the right and three steps to the left back again. They can't help it. It is because they are so happy.

When they are more than usually rollicking they stand in a semicircle, with their hands on each other's shoulders, and sway from side to side, trying to make themselves sick. But this is only when they are simply bursting with joy.

Stage peasants never have any work to do.

Sometimes we see them going to work, sometimes coming home from work, but nobody has ever seen them actually at work. They could not afford to work—it would spoil their clothes.

They are very sympathetic, are stage peasants. They never seem to have any affairs of their own to think about, but they make up for this by taking a three-hundred-horse-power interest in things in which they have no earthly concern.

What particularly rouses them is the heroine's love affairs. They could listen to them all day.

They yearn to hear what she said to him and to be told what he replied to her, and they repeat it to each other.

In our own love-sick days we often used to go and relate to various people all the touching conversations that took place between our lady-love and ourselves; but our friends never seemed to get excited over it. On the contrary, a casual observer might even have been led to the idea that they were bored by our recital. And they had trains to catch and men to meet before we had got a quarter through the job.

Ah, how often in those days have we yearned for the sympathy of a stage peasantry, who would have crowded round us, eager not to miss one word of the thrilling narrative, who would have rejoiced with us with an encouraging laugh, and have consoled with us with a grieved "Oh," and who would have gone off, when we had had enough of them, singing about it.

By the way, this is a very beautiful trait in the character of the stage peasantry, their prompt and unquestioning compliance with the slightest wish of any of the principals.

"Leave me, friends," says the heroine, beginning to make preparations for weeping, and before she can turn round they are clean gone—one lot to the right, evidently making for the back entrance of the public-house, and the other half to the left, where they visibly hide themselves behind the pump and wait till somebody else wants them.

The stage peasantry do not talk much, their strong point being to listen. When they cannot get any more information about the state of the heroine's heart, they like to be told long and complicated stories about wrongs done years ago to people that they never heard of. They seem to be able to grasp and understand these stories with ease. This makes the audience envious of them.

When the stage peasantry do talk, however, they soon make up for lost time. They start off all together with a suddenness that nearly knocks you over.

They all talk. Nobody listens. Watch any two of them. They are both talking as hard as they can go. They have been listening quite enough to other people: you can't expect them to listen to each other. But the conversation under such conditions must be very trying.

And then they flirt so sweetly! so idyllicly!

It has been our privilege to see real peasantry

flirt, and it has always struck us as a singularly solid and substantial affair—makes one think, somehow, of a steam-roller flirting with a cow—but on the stage it is so sylph-like. She has short skirts, and her stockings are so much tidier and better fitting than these things are in real peasant life, and she is arch and coy. She turns away from him and laughs—such a silvery laugh.

And he is ruddy and curly haired and has on such a beautiful waistcoat! how can she help but love him? And he is so tender and devoted and holds her by the waist; and she slips round and comes up the other side. Oh, it is so bewitching!

The stage peasantry like to do their love-making as much in public as possible. Some people fancy a place all to themselves for this sort of thing—where nobody else is about. We ourselves do. But the stage peasant is more sociably inclined. Give him the village green, just outside the public-house, or the square on market-day to do his spooning in.

They are very faithful, are stage peasants. No jilting, no fickleness, no breach of promise. If the gentleman in pink walks out with the lady in blue in the first act, pink and blue will be married in the end. He sticks to her all through and she sticks to him.

Girls in yellow may come and go, girls in green may laugh and dance—the gentleman in pink heeds them not. Blue is his color, and he never leaves it. He stands beside it, he sits beside it. He drinks with her, he smiles with her, he laughs with her, he dances with her, he comes on with her, he goes off with her.

When the time comes for talking he talks to her and only her, and she talks to him and only him. Thus there is no jealousy, no quarreling. But we should prefer an occasional change ourselves.

There are no married people in stage villages and no children (consequently, of course—happy village! oh, to discover it and spend a month there!). There are just the same number of men as there are women in all stage villages, and they are all about the same age and each young man loves some young woman. But they never marry.

They talk a lot about it, but they never do it. The artful beggars! They see too much what it's like among the principals.

The stage peasant is fond of drinking, and when he drinks he likes to let you know he is drinking. None of your quiet half-pint inside the bar for him. He likes to come out in the street and sing about it and do tricks with it, such as turning it topsy-turvy over his head.

Notwithstanding all this he is moderate, mind you. You can't say he takes too much. One small jug of ale among forty is his usual allowance.

He has a keen sense of humor and is easily amused. There is something almost pathetic about the way he goes into convulsions of laughter over such very small jokes. How a man like that would enjoy a real joke! One day he will perhaps hear a real joke. Who knows? It will, however, probably kill him. One grows to love the stage peasant after awhile. He is so good, so child-like, so unworldly. He realizes one's ideal of Christianity.

THE GOOD OLD MAN.

HE has lost his wife. But he knows where she is—among the angels!

She isn't all gone, because the heroine has her hair. "Ah, you've got your mother's hair," says the good old man, feeling the girl's head all over as she kneels beside him. Then they all wipe away a tear.

The people on the stage think very highly of the good old man, but they don't encourage him much after the first act. He generally dies in the first act.

If he does not seem likely to die they murder him.

He is a most unfortunate old gentleman. Anything he is mixed up in seems bound to go wrong. If he is manager or director of a bank, smash it goes before even one act is over. His particular firm is always on the verge of bankruptcy. We have only to be told that he has put all his savings into a company—no matter how sound and promising an affair it may always have been and may still seem—to know that that company is a "goner."

No power on earth can save it after once the good old man has become a shareholder.

If we lived in stage-land and were asked to join any financial scheme, our first question would be: "Is the good old man in it?" If so, that would decide us.

When the good old man is a trustee for any one he can battle against adversity much longer. He is a plucky old fellow, and while that trust money lasts he keeps a brave heart and fights on boldly. It is not until he has spent the last penny of it that he gives way.

It then flashes across the old man's mind that his motives for having lived in luxury upon that trust money for years may possibly be misunderstood. The world—the hollow, heartless world—will call it a swindle and regard him generally as a precious old fraud.

This idea quite troubles the good old man.

But the world really ought not to blame him. No one, we are sure, could be more ready and willing to make amends (when found out); and to put matters right he will cheerfully sacrifice his daughter's happiness and marry her to the villain.

The villain, by the way, has never a penny to bless himself with, and cannot even pay his own debts, let alone helping anybody else out of a scrape. But the good old man does not think of this.

Our own personal theory, based upon a careful comparison of similarities, is that the good old man is in reality the stage hero grown old. There is something about the good old man's chuckle-headed

simplicity, about his helpless imbecility, and his irritating damtom foolishness that is strangely suggestive of the hero.

He is just the sort of old man that we should imagine the hero would develop into.

We may, of course, be wrong; but that is our idea.

THE IRISHMAN.

HE says "Shure" and "Bedad" and in moments of exultation "Beghorra." That is all the Irish he knows.

He is very poor, but scrupulously honest. His great ambition is to pay his rent, and he is devoted to his landlord.

He is always cheerful and always good. We never knew a bad Irishman on the stage. Sometimes a stage Irishman seems to be a bad man—such as the "agent" or the "informer"—but in these cases it invariably turns out in the end that this man was all along a Scotchman, and thus what had been a mystery becomes clear and explicable.

The stage Irishman is always doing the most wonderful things imaginable. We do not see him do those wonderful things. He does them when nobody is by and tells us all about them afterward: that is how we know of them.

We remember on one occasion, when we were young and somewhat inexperienced, planking our money down and going into a theater solely and purposely to see the stage Irishman do the things he was depicted as doing on the posters outside.

They were really marvelous, the things he did on that poster.

In the right-hand upper corner he appeared running across country on all fours, with a red herring sticking out from his coat-tails, while far behind came hounds and horsemen hunting him. But their chance of ever catching him up was clearly hopeless.

To the left he was represented as running away over one of the wildest and most rugged bits of landscape we have ever seen with a very big man on his back. Six policemen stood scattered about a mile behind him. They had evidently been running after him, but had at last given up the pursuit as useless.

In the center of the poster he was having a friendly fight with seventeen ladies and gentlemen. Judging from the costumes, the affair appeared to be a wedding. A few of the guests had already been killed and lay dead about the floor. The survivors, however, were enjoying themselves immensely, and of all that gay group he was the gayest.

At the moment chosen by the artist, he had just succeeded in cracking the bridegroom's skull.

"We must see this," said we to ourselves. "This is good." And we had a bob's worth.

But he did not do any of the things that we have mentioned, after all—at least, we mean we did not see him do any of them. It seems he did them "off," and then came on and told his mother all about it afterward.

He told it very well, but somehow or other we were disappointed. We had so reckoned on that fight.

By the bye, we have noticed, even among the characters of real life, a tendency to perform most of their wonderful feats "off."

It has been our privilege since then to gaze upon many posters on which have been delineated strange and moving stage events.

We have seen the hero holding the villain up high above his head, and throwing him about that carelessly that we have felt afraid he would break something with him.

We have seen a heroine leaping from the roof of a house on one side of the street and being caught by the comic man standing on the roof of a house on the other side of the street and thinking nothing of it.

We have seen railway trains rushing into each other at the rate of sixty miles an hour. We have seen houses blown up by dynamite two hundred feet into the air. We have seen the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the destruction of Pompeii, and the return of the British army from Egypt in one "set" each.

Such incidents as earthquakes, wrecks in mid-ocean, revolutions and battles we take no note of, they being commonplace and ordinary.

But we do not go inside to see these things now. We have two looks at the poster instead; it is more satisfying.

The Irishman, to return to our friend, is very fond of whisky—the stage Irishman, we mean. Whisky is forever in his thoughts—and often in other places belonging to him, besides.

The fashion in dress among stage Irishmen is rather picturesque than neat. Tailors must have a hard time of it in stage Ireland.

The stage Irishman has also an original taste in hats. He always wears a hat without a crown; whether to keep his head cool or with any political significance we cannot say.

THE DETECTIVE.

AN! he is a cute one, he is. Possibly in real life he would not be deemed anything extraordinary, but by contrast with the average of stage men and women, any one who is not a born fool naturally appears somewhat Machiavellian.

He is the only man in the play who does not swallow all the villain tells him and believe it, and come up with his mouth open for more. He is the only man who can see through the disguise of an overcoat and a new hat.

There is something very wonderful about the disguising power of cloaks and hats upon the stage. This comes from the habit people on the stage have of recognizing their friends, not by their faces and voices, but by their cloaks and hats.

A married man on the stage knows his wife, because he knows she wears a blue ulster and a red bonnet. The moment she leaves off that blue ulster and red bonnet he is lost and does not know where she is.

She puts on a yellow cloak and a green hat, and coming in at another door says she is a lady from the country, and does he want a housekeeper?

Having lost his beloved wife, and feeling that

there is no one now to keep the children quiet, he engages her. She puzzles him a good deal, this new housekeeper. There is something about her that strangely reminds him of his darling Nell—maybe her boots and dress, which she has not had time to change.

Sadly the slow acts pass away until one day, as it is getting near closing-time, she puts on the blue ulster and the red bonnet again and comes in at the old original door.

Then he recognizes her and asks her where she has been all these cruel years.

Even the bad people, who as a rule do possess a little sense—indeed, they are the only persons in the play who ever pretend to any—are deceived by singularly thin disguises.

The detective comes in to their secret councils, with his hat drawn down over his eyes, and followed by the hero speaking in a squeaky voice; and the villains mistake them for members of the band and tell them all their plans.

If the villains can't get themselves found out that way, then they go into a public tea-garden and recount their crimes to one another in a loud tone of voice.

They evidently think that it is only fair to give the detective a chance.

The detective must not be confounded with the policeman. The stage policeman is always on the side of the villain; the detective backs virtue.

The stage detective is, in fact, the earthly agent

of a discerning and benevolent Providence. He stands by and allows vice to be triumphant and the good people to be persecuted for awhile without interference. Then when he considers that we have all had about enough of it (to which conclusion, by the bye, he arrives somewhat late) he comes forward, handcuffs the bad people, sorts out and gives back to the good people all their various estates and wives, promises the chief villain twenty years' penal servitude, and all is joy.

THE SAILOR.

HE does suffer so with his trousers. He has to stop and pull them up about twice every minute.

One of these days, if he is not careful, there will be an accident happen to those trousers.

If the stage sailor will follow our advice, he will be warned in time and will get a pair of braces.

Sailors in real life do not have nearly so much trouble with their trousers as sailors on the stage do. Why is this? We have seen a good deal of sailors in real life, but on only one occasion, that we can remember, did we ever see a real sailor pull his trousers up.

And then he did not do it a bit like they do it on the stage.

The stage sailor places his right hand behind him and his left in front, leaps up into the air, kicks out his leg behind in a gay and bird-like way, and the thing is done.

The real sailor that we saw began by saying a bad word. Then he leaned up against a brick wall and undid his belt, pulled up his "bags" as he stood there (he never attempted to leap up into the air), tucked in his jersey, shook his legs, and walked on.

It was a most unpicturesque performance to watch.

The thing that the stage sailor most craves in this life is that somebody should shiver his timbers.

"Shiver my timbers!" is the request he makes to every one he meets. But nobody ever does it.

His chief desire with regard to the other people in the play is that they should "belay there, avast!" We do not know how this is done; but the stage sailor is a good and kindly man, and we feel convinced he would not recommend the exercise if it were not conducive to piety and health.

The stage sailor is good to his mother and dances the hornpipe beautifully. We have never found a real sailor who could dance a hornpipe, though we have made extensive inquiries throughout the profession. We were introduced to a ship's steward who offered to do us a cellar-flap for a pot of four-half, but that was not what we wanted.

The stage sailor is gay and rollicking: the real sailors we have met have been, some of them, the most worthy and single-minded of men, but they have appeared sedate rather than gay, and they haven't rollicked much.

The stage sailor seems to have an easy time of it when at sea. The hardest work we have ever seen him do then has been folding up a rope or dusting the sides of the ship.

But it is only in his very busy moments that he has to work to this extent; most of his time is occupied in chatting with the captain.

By the way, speaking of the sea, few things are more remarkable in their behavior than a stage sea. It must be difficult to navigate in a stage sea, the currents are so confusing.

As for the waves, there is no knowing how to steer for them ; they are so tricky. At one moment they are all on the larboard, the sea on the other side of the vessel being perfectly calm, and the next instant they have crossed over and are all on the starboard, and before the captain can think how to meet this new dodge, the whole ocean has slid round and got itself into a heap at the back of him.

Seamanship is useless against such very unprofessional conduct as this, and the vessel is wrecked.

A wreck at (stage) sea is a truly awful sight. The thunder and lightning never leave off for an instant; the crew run round and round the mast and scream ; the heroine, carrying the stage child in her arms and with her back hair down, rushes about and gets in everybody's way. The comic man : one is calm !

The next instant the bulwarks fall down flat on the deck and the mast goes straight up into the sky and disappears, then the water reaches the powder magazine and there is a terrific explosion.

This is followed by a sound as of linen sheets being ripped up, and the passengers and crew hurry downstairs into the cabin, evidently with the idea of getting out of the way of the sea, which has climbed up and is now level with the deck.

The next moment the vessel separates in the middle

and goes off R. and L., so as to make room for a small boat containing the heroine, the child, the comic man, and one sailor.

The way small boats are managed at (stage) sea is even more wonderful than the way in which ships are sailed.

To begin with, everybody sits sideways along the middle of the boat, all facing the starboard. They do not attempt to row. One man does all the work with one scull. This scull he puts down through the water till it touches the bed of the ocean, and then he shoves.

“Deep-sea punting” would be the technical term for the method, we presume.

In this way do they toil—or rather, to speak correctly, does the one man toil—through the awful night, until with joy they see before them the light-house rocks.

The light-house keeper comes out with a lantern. The boat is run in among the breakers and all are saved.

And then the band plays.

DREAMS.

THE most extraordinary dream I ever had was one in which I fancied that, as I was going into a theater, the cloak-room attendant stopped me in the lobby and insisted on my leaving my legs behind me.

I was not surprised; indeed, my acquaintance with theater harpies would prevent my feeling any surprise at such a demand, even in my waking moments; but I was, I must honestly confess, considerably annoyed. It was not the payment of the cloak-room fee that I so much minded—I offered to give that to the man then and there. It was the parting with my legs that I objected to.

I said I had never heard of such a rule being attempted to be put in force at any respectable theater before, and that I considered it a most absurd and vexatious regulation. I also said I should write to *The Times* about it.

The man replied that he was very sorry, but that those were his instructions. People complained that they could not get to and from their seats comfortably, because other people's legs were always in the way; and it had, therefore, been decided that, in future, everybody should leave their legs outside.

It seemed to me that the management, in making this order, had clearly gone beyond their legal right ; and, under ordinary circumstances, I should have disputed it. Being present, however, more in the character of a guest than in that of a patron, I hardly like to make a disturbance; and so I sat down and meekly prepared to comply with the demand.

I had never before known that the human leg did unscrew. I had always thought it was a fixture. But the man showed me how to undo them, and I found that they came off quite easily.

The discovery did not surprise me any more than the original request that I should take them off had done. Nothing does surprise one in a dream.

I dreamed once that I was going to be hanged ; but I was not at all surprised about it. Nobody was. My relations came to see me off, I thought, and to wish me " Good-by !" They all came, and were all very pleasant ; but they were not in the least astonished—not one of them. Everybody appeared to regard the coming tragedy as one of the most-naturally-to-be-expected things in the world.

They bore the calamity, besides, with an amount of stoicism that would have done credit to a Spartan father. There was no fuss, no scene. On the contrary, an atmosphere of mild cheerfulness prevailed.

Yet they were very kind. Somebody—an uncle, I think—left me a packet of sandwiches and a little something in a flask, in case, as he said, I should feel peckish on the scaffold.

It is "those twin-jailers of the daring" thought, Knowledge and Experience, that teach us surprise. We are surprised and incredulous when, in novels and plays, we come across good men and women, because Knowledge and Experience have taught us how rare and problematical is the existence of such people. In waking life, my friends and relations would, of course, have been surprised at hearing that I had committed a murder, and was, in consequence, about to be hanged, because Knowledge and Experience would have taught them that, in a country where the law is powerful and the police alert, the Christian citizen is usually pretty successful in withstanding the voice of temptation, prompting him to commit crime of an illegal character.

But into Dreamland, Knowledge and Experience do not enter. They stay without, together with the dull, dead clay of which they form a part; while the freed brain, released from their narrowing tutelage, steals softly past the ebon gate, to wanton at its own sweet will among the mazy paths that wind through the garden of Persephone.

Nothing that it meets with in that eternal land astonishes it, because, unfettered by the dense conviction of our waking mind, that nought outside the ken of our own vision can in this universe be, all things to it are possible and even probable. In dreams, we fly and wonder not—except that we never flew before. We go naked, yet are not ashamed, though we mildly wonder what the police are about that they do not stop us. We converse

with our dead, and think it was unkind that they did not come back to us before. In dreams, there happens that which human language cannot tell. In dreams, we see "the light that never was on sea or land," we hear the sounds that never yet were heard by waking ears.

It is only in sleep that true imagination ever stirs within us. Awake, we never imagine anything; we merely alter, vary, or transpose. We give another twist to the kaleidoscope of the things we see around us, and obtain another pattern; but not one of us has ever added one tiniest piece of new glass to the toy.

A Dean Swift sees one race of people smaller, and another race of people larger than the race of people that live down his own streets. And he also sees a land where the horses take the place of men. A Bulwer Lytton lays the scene of one of his novels inside the earth instead of outside. A Rider Haggard introduces us to a lady whose age is a few years more than the average woman would care to confess to; and pictures crabs larger than the usual shilling or eighteen-penny size. The number of so called imaginative writers who visit the moon is legion, and for all the novelty that they find, when they get there, they might just as well have gone to Putney. Others are continually drawing for us visions of the world one hundred or one thousand years hence. There is always a depressing absence of human nature about the place; so much so, that one feels great consolation in the

thought, while reading, that we ourselves shall be comfortably dead and buried before the picture can be realized. In these prophesied Utopias everybody is painfully good and clean and happy, and all the work is done by electricity.

There is somewhat too much electricity, for my taste, in these worlds to come. One is reminded of those pictorial enamel-paint advertisements that one sees about so often now, in which all the members of an extensive household are represented as gathered together in one room, spreading enamel-paint over everything they can lay their hands upon. The old man is on a step-ladder, daubing the walls and ceiling with "cuckoo's-egg green," while the parlor-maid and the cook are on their knees, painting the floor with "sealing-wax red." The old lady is doing the picture frames in "terra cotta." The eldest daughter and her young man are making sly love in a corner over a pot of "high art yellow," with which, so soon as they have finished wasting their time, they will, it is manifest, proceed to elevate the piano. Younger brothers and sisters are busy freshening up the chairs and tables with "strawberry-jam pink" and "jubilee magenta." Every blessed thing in that room is being coated with enamel paint, from the sofa to the fire-irons, from the sideboard to the eight-day clock. If there is any paint left over, it will be used up for the family Bible and the canary.

It is claimed for this invention that a little child can make as much mess with it as can a grown-up

person, and so all the children of the family are represented in the picture as hard at work, enameling whatever few articles of furniture and household use the grasping selfishness of their elders has spared to them. One is painting the toasting fork in a "skim-milk blue," while another is giving æsthetical value to the Dutch oven by means of a new shade of art green. The bootjack is being renovated in "old gold," and the baby is sitting on the floor, smothering its own cradle with "flush-upon-a-maiden's cheek peach color."

One feels that the thing is being overdone. That family, before another month is gone, will be among the strongest opponents of enamel paint that the century has produced. Enamel paint will be the ruin of that once happy home. Enamel paint has a cold, glassy, cynical appearance. Its presence everywhere about the place will begin to irritate the old man in the course of a week or so. He will call it, "This damn'd sticky stuff!" and will tell the wife that he wonders she didn't paint herself and the children with it while she was about it. She will reply, in an exasperatingly quiet tone of voice, that she does like that. Perhaps he will say next, that she did not warn him against it, and tell him what an idiot he was making of himself, spoiling the whole house with his foolish fads. Each one will persist that it was the other one who first suggested the absurdity, and they will sit up in bed and quarrel about it every night for a month.

The children having acquired a taste for smudging the concoction about, and there being nothing else left untouched in the house, will try to enamel the cat; and then there will be bloodshed, and broken windows, and spoiled infants, and sorrows and yells. The smell of the paint will make everybody ill; and the servants will give notice. Tradesmen's boys will lean up against places that are not dry and get their clothes enameled and claim compensation. And the baby will suck the paint off its cradle and have fits.

But the person that will suffer most will, of course, be the eldest daughter's young man. The eldest daughter's young man is always unfortunate. He means well, and he tries hard. His great ambition is to make the family love him. But fate is ever against him, and he only succeeds in gaining their undisguised contempt. The fact of his being "gone" on their Emily is, of itself, naturally sufficient to stamp him as an imbecile in the eyes of Emily's brothers and sisters. The father finds him slow, and thinks the girl might have done better; while the best that his future mother-in-law (his sole supporter) can say for him is, that he seems steady.

There is only one thing that prompts the family to tolerate him, and that is the reflection that he is going to take Emily away from them.

On that understanding they put up with him.

The eldest daughter's young man, in this particular case, will, you may depend upon it, choose that

exact moment when the baby's life is hovering in the balance, and the cook is waiting for her wages with her box in the hall, and a coal-heaver is at the front door with a policeman, making a row about the damage to his trousers, to come in, smiling, with a specimen pot of some new high art, squashed-tomato-shade enamel point, and suggest that they should try it on the old man's pipe.

Then Emily will go off into hysterics, and Emily's male progenitor will firmly but quietly lead that ill-starred yet true-hearted young man to the public side of the garden-gate; and the engagement will be "off."

Too much of anything is a mistake, as the man said when his wife presented him with four new healthy children in one day. We should practice moderation in all matters. A little enamel paint would have been good. They might have enameled the house inside and out, and have left the furniture alone. Or they might have colored the furniture, and let the house be. But an entirely and completely enameled home—a home, such as enamel-paint manufacturers love to picture on their advertisements, over which the yearning eye wanders in vain, seeking one single square inch of unenameled matter—is, I am convinced, a mistake. It may be a home that, as the testimonials assure us, will easily wash. It may be an "artistic" home; but the average man is not yet educated up to the appreciation of it. The average man does not care for high art. At a certain point, the average man gets sick of high art.

So, in these coming Utopias, in which our unhappy grandchildren will have to drag out their colorless existence, there will be too much electricity. They will grow to loathe electricity.

Electricity is going to light them, warm them, carry them, doctor them, cook for them, execute them, if necessary. They are going to be weaned on electricity, rocked in their cradles by electricity, slapped by electricity, ruled and regulated and guided by electricity, buried by electricity. I may be wrong, but I rather think they are going to be hatched by electricity.

In the new world of our progressionist teachers, it is electricity that is the real motive-power. The men and women are only marionettes—worked by electricity.

But it was not to speak of the electricity in them, but of the originality in them, that I referred to these works of fiction. There is no originality in them whatever. Human thought is incapable of originality. No man ever yet imagined a new thing—only some variation or extension of an old thing.

The sailor, when he was asked what he would do with a fortune, promptly replied :

“Buy all the rum and ’baccy there is in the world.”

“And what after that?” they asked him.

“Eh?”

“What would you buy after that—after you had bought up all the rum and tobacco there was in the world—what would you buy then?”

"After that? Oh! 'um!" (a long pause). "Oh! (with inspiration) "why, more 'baccy!"

Rum and tobacco he knew something of, and could therefore imagine about. He did not know any other luxuries, therefore he could not conceive of any others.

So if you ask one of these Utopian-dreaming gentry what, after they had secured for their world all the electricity there was in the Universe, and after every mortal thing in their ideal Paradise, was done and said and thought by electricity, they could imagine as further necessary to human happiness, they would probably muse for awhile, and then reply, "More electricity."

They know electricity. They have seen the electric light, and heard of electric boats and omnibuses. They have possibly had an electric shock at a railway station for a penny.

Therefore, knowing that electricity does three things, they can go on and "imagine" electricity doing three hundred things, and the very great ones among them can imagine it doing three thousand things; but for them, or anybody else, to imagine a new force, totally unconnected with and different from anything yet known in nature, would be utterly impossible.

Human thought is not a firework, ever shooting off fresh forms and shapes as it burns; it is a tree, growing very slowly—you can watch it long and see no movement—very silently, unnoticed. It was planted in the world many thousand years ago, a

tiny, sickly plant. And men guarded it and tended it, and gave up life and fame to aid its growth. In the hot days of their youth, they came to the gate of the garden and knocked, begging to be let in, and to be counted among the gardeners. And their young companions without called to them to come back, and play the man with bow and spear, and win sweet smiles from rosy lips, and take their part amid the feast, and dance, not stoop with wrinkled brows, at weaklings' work. And the passers-by mocked them and called shame, and others cried out to stone them. And still they stayed there laboring, that the tree might grow a little, and they died and were forgotten.

And the tree grew fair and strong. The storms of ignorance passed over it, and harmed it not. The fierce fires of superstition soared around it; but men leaped into the flames and beat them back, perishing, and the tree grew. With the sweat of their brow have men nourished its green leaves. Their tears have moistened the earth about it. With their blood they have watered its roots.

The seasons have come and passed, and the tree has grown and flourished. And its branches have spread far and high, and ever fresh shoots are bursting forth, and ever new leaves unfolding to the light. But they are all part of the one tree—the tree that was planted on the first birthday of the human race. The stem that bears them springs from the gnarled old trunk that was green and soft when white-haired Time was a little child; the sap that

feeds them is drawn up through the roots that twine and twist about the bones of the ages that are dead.

The human mind can no more produce an original thought than a tree can bear an original fruit. As well might one cry for an original note in music as expect an original idea from a human brain.

One wishes our friends, the critics, would grasp this simple truth, and leave off clamoring for the impossible, and being shocked because they do not get it. When a new book is written, the high-class critic opens it with feelings of faint hope, tempered by strong conviction of coming disappointment. As he pores over the pages, his brow darkens with virtuous indignation, and his lip curls with the God-like contempt that the exceptionally great critic ever feels for everybody in this world, who is not yet dead. Buoyed up by a touching, but totally fallacious, belief that he is performing a public duty, and that the rest of the community is waiting in breathless suspense to learn his opinion of the work in question, before forming any judgment concerning it themselves, he, nevertheless, wearily struggles through about a third of it. Then his long-suffering soul revolts, and he flings it aside with a cry of despair.

"Why, there is no originality whatever in this," he says. "This book is taken bodily from the Old Testament. It is the story of Adam and Eve all over again. The hero is a mere man! with two arms, two legs, and a head (so called). Why, it is

only Moses's Adam under another name! And the heroine is nothing but a woman! and she is described as beautiful, and as having long hair. The author may call her 'Angelina,' or any other name he chooses; but he has evidently, whether he acknowledges it or not, copied her direct from Eve. The characters are barefaced plagiarisms from the book of Genesis! Oh! to find an author with originality!"

One spring I went a walking tour in the country. It was a glorious spring. Not the sort of spring they give us in these miserable times, under this shameless government—a mixture of east wind, blizzard, snow, rain, slush, fog, frost, hail, sleet and thunder-storms—but a sunny, blue-sky'd, joyous spring, such as we used to have regularly every year when I was a young man, and things were different.

It was an exceptionally beautiful spring, even for those golden days; and as I wandered through the waking land, and saw the dawning of the coming green, and watched the blush upon the hawthorn hedge, deepening each day beneath the kisses of the sun, and looked up at the proud old mother trees, dandling their myriad baby buds upon their strong fond arms, holding them high for the soft west wind to caress as he passed laughing by, and marked the primrose yellow creep across the carpet of the woods, and saw the new flush of the field and saw the new light on the hills, and heard the new-found gladness of the birds, and heard from copse and

farm and meadow the timid callings of the little new-born things, wondering to find themselves alive, and smelt the freshness of the earth, and felt the promise in the air, and felt a strong hand in the wind, my spirit rose within me. Spring had come to me also, and stirred me with a strange new life, with a strange new hope. I, too, was part of nature, and it was spring! Tender leaves and blossoms were unfolding from my heart. Bright flowers of love and gratitude were opening round its roots. I felt new strength in all my limbs. New blood was pulsing through my veins. Nobler thoughts and nobler longings were throbbing through my brain.

As I walked, Nature came and talked beside me, and showed me the world and myself, and the ways of God seemed clearer.

It seemed to me a pity that all the beautiful and precious thoughts and ideas that were crowding in upon me should be lost to my fellow-men, and so I pitched my tent at a little cottage, and set to work to write them down then and there as they came to me.

"It has been complained of me," I said to myself, "that I do not write literary and high-class work—at least, not work that is exceptionally literary and high-class. This reproach shall be removed. I will write an article that shall be a classic. I have worked for the ordinary, every-day reader. It is right that I should do something now to improve the literature of my beloved country."

And I wrote a grand essay—though I say it who

should not, though I don't see why I shouldn't—all about spring, and the way it made you feel, and what it made you think. It was simply crowded with elevated thoughts and high-class ideas and cultured wit, was that essay. There was only one fault about that essay: it was too brilliant. I wanted commonplace relief. It would have exhausted the average reader; so much cleverness would have wearied him.

I wish I could remember some of the beautiful things in that essay, and here set them down; because then you would be able to see what they were like for yourselves, and that would be so much more simpler than my explaining to you how beautiful they were. Unfortunately, however, I cannot now call to mind any of them.

I was very proud of this essay, and when I got back to town I called on a very superior friend of mine, a critic, and read it to him. I do not care for him to see any of my usual work, because he really is a very superior person indeed, and the persual of it appears to give him pains inside. But this article, I thought, would do him good.

"What do you think of it?" I asked, when I had finished.

"Splendid," he replied, "excellently arranged. I never knew you were so well acquainted with the works of the old writers. Why, there is scarcely a classic of any note that you have not quoted from. But where—where," he added, musing, "did you get that last idea but two from? It's the only one

I don't seem to remember. It isn't a bit of your own, is it?"

He said that, if so, he should advise me to leave it out. Not that it was altogether bad, but that the interpolation of a modern thought among so unique a collection of passages from the ancients seemed to spoil the scheme.

And he enumerated the various dead-and-buried gentlemen from whom he appeared to think I had collated my article.

"But," I replied, when I had recovered my astonishment sufficiently to speak, "it isn't a collection at all. It is all original. I wrote the thoughts down as they came to me. I have never read any of these people you mention, except Shakespeare."

Of course Shakespeare was bound to be among them. I am getting to dislike that man so. He is always being held up before us young authors as a model, and I do hate models. There was a model boy at our school, I remember, Henry Summers; and it was just the same there. It was continually, "Look at Henry Summers! he doesn't put the preposition before the verb, and spell business b-i-z!" or, "Why can't you write like Henry Summers? *He* doesn't get the ink all over the copy-book and half-way up his back!" We got tired of this everlasting "Look at Henry Summers!" after a while, and so, one afternoon, on the way home, a few of us lured Henry Summers up a dark court; and when he came out again he was not worth looking at

Now it is perpetually, "Look at Shakespeare!" "Why don't you write like Shakespeare?" "Shakespeare never made that joke. Why don't you joke like Shakespeare?"

If you are in the play-writing line it is still worse for you. "Why don't you write plays like Shakespeare's?" they indignantly say. "Shakespeare never made his comic man a penny steamboat captain." "Shakespeare never made his hero address the girl as 'duddy.' Why don't you copy Shakespeare?" If you do try to copy Shakespeare, they tell you that you must be a fool to attempt to imitate Shakespeare.

Oh, shouldn't I like to get Shakespeare up our street, and punch him!

"I cannot help that," replied my critical friend—to return to our previous question—"the germ of every thought and idea you have got in that article can be traced back to the writers I have named. If you doubt it, I will get down the books, and show you the passages for yourself."

But I declined the offer. I said I would take his word for it, and would rather not see the passages referred to. I felt indignant. "If," as I said, "these men—these Platos and Socrateses and Ciceros and Sophocleses and Aristophaneses and Aristotles and the rest of them had been taking advantage of my absence to go about the world spoiling my business for me, I would rather not hear any more about them."

And I put on my hat and came out, and I have never tried to write anything original since.

I dreamed a dream once. (It is the sort of thing a man would dream. You cannot very well dream anything else, I know. But the phrase sounds poetical and biblical, and so I use it.) I dreamed that I was in a strange country—indeed, one might say an extraordinary country. It was ruled entirely by critics.

The people in this strange land had a very high opinion of critics—nearly as high an opinion of critics as the critics themselves had, but not, of course, quite—that not being practicable—and they had agreed to be guided in all things by the critics. I stayed some years in that land. But it was not a cheerful place to live in, so I dreamed.

There were authors in this country, at first, and they wrote books. But the critics could find nothing original in the books whatever, and said it was a pity that men, who might be usefully employed hoeing potatoes, should waste their time and the time of the critics, which was of still more importance, in stringing together a collection of platitudes, familiar to every school-boy, and dishing up old plots and stories that had already been cooked and recooked for the public until everybody had been surfeited with them.

And the writers read what the critics said and sighed, and gave up writing books, and went off and hoed potatoes, as advised. They had had no experience in hoeing potatoes, and they hoed very badly; and the people whose potatoes they hoed strongly recommended them to leave hoeing pota-

toes, and to go back and write books. But you can't do what everybody advises.

There were artists also in this strange world, at first, and they painted pictures, which the critics came and looked at through eyeglasses.

"Nothing whatever original in them," said the critics ; "same old colors, same old perspective and form, same old sunset, same old sea and land, and sky and figures. Why do these poor men waste their time, painting pictures, when they might be so much more satisfactorily employed on ladders painting houses?"

Nothing, by the by, you may have noticed, troubles your critic more than the idea that the artist is wasting his time. It is the waste of time that vexes the critic ; he has such an exalted idea of the value of other people's time. "Dear, dear me!" he says to himself, "why, in the time the man must have taken to paint this picture or to write this book, he might have blacked fifteen thousand pairs of boots, or have carried fifteen thousand hods of mortar up a ladder. This is how the time of the world is lost!"

It never occurs to him that, but for that picture or book, the artist would, in all probability, have been mouching about with a pipe in his mouth, getting into trouble.

It reminds me of the way people used to talk to me when I was a boy. I would be sitting, as good as gold, reading "The Pirate's Lair," when some cultured relative would look over my shoulder and

say : "Bah ! what are you wasting your time with rubbish for ? Why don't you go and do something useful ?" and would take the book away from me. Upon which I would get up, and go out to "do something useful ;" and would come home an hour afterward, looking like a bit out of a battle picture, having tumbled through the roof of Farmer Bate's greenhouse and killed a cactus, though totally unable to explain how I came to be *on* the roof of Farmer Bate's greenhouse. They had much better have left me alone, lost in "The Pirate's Lair!"

The artists in this land of which I dreamed left off painting pictures, after hearing what the critics said, and purchased ladders, and went off and painted houses.

Because, you see, this country of which I dreamed was not one of those vulgar, ordinary countries, such as exist in the waking world, where people let the critics talk as much as ever they like, and nobody pays the slightest attention to what they say. Here, in this strange land, the critics were taken seriously, and their advice followed.

As for the poets and sculptors, they were very soon shut up. The idea of any educated person wanting to read modern poetry when he could obtain Homer, or caring to look at any other statue while there was still some of the Venus de Medicis left, was too absurd. Poets and sculptors were only wasting their time.

What new occupation they were recommended to adopt, I forget. Some calling they knew nothing

whatever about, and that they were totally unfitted for, of course.

The musicians tried their art for a little while, but they, too, were of no use. "Merely a repetition of the same notes in different combinations," said the critics. "Why will people waste their time writing unoriginal music, when they might be sweeping crossings?"

One man had written a play. I asked what the critics had said about him. They showed me his tomb.

Then, there being no more artists or *littérateurs* or dramatists or musicians left for their beloved critics to criticise, the general public of this enlightened land said to themselves, "Why should not our critics come and criticise us? Criticism is useful to a man. Have we not often been told so? Look how useful it has been to the artists and writers—saved 'the poor fellows from wasting their time? Why shouldn't *we* have some of its benefits?"

They suggested the idea to the critics, and the critics thought it an excellent one, and said they would undertake the job with pleasure. One must say for the critics that they never shirk work. They will sit and criticise for eighteen hours a day, if necessary, or even, if quite unnecessary, for the matter of that. You can't give them too much to criticise. They will criticise everything and everybody in this world. They will criticise everything in the next world, too, when they get there. I expect poor old Pluto has a lively time with them all. as it is.

So, when a man built a house, or a farm-yard hen laid an egg, the critics were asked in to comment on it. They found that none of the houses were original. On every floor were passages that seemed mere copies from passages in other houses. They were all built on the same hackneyed plan ; cellars underneath, ground floor level with the street, attic at the top. No originality anywhere!

So, likewise with the eggs. Every egg suggested reminiscences of other eggs.

It was heartrending work.

The critics criticised all things. When a young couple fell in love, they each, before thinking of marriage, called upon the critics for a criticism of the other one.

Needless to say that, in the result, no marriage ever came of it.

"My dear young lady," the critics would say, after the inspection had taken place, "I can discover nothing new whatever about the young man. You would simply be wasting your time in marrying him."

Or, to the young man, it would be :

"Oh, dear, no ! Nothing attractive about the girl at all. Who on earth gave you that notion ? Simply a lovely face and figure, angelic disposition, beautiful mind, stanch heart, noble character. Why, there must have been nearly a dozen such girls born into the world since its creation. You would be only wasting your time loving her."

They criticised the birds for their hackneyed style

of singing, and the flowers for their hackneyed scents and colors. They complained of the weather that it lacked originality—(true, they had not lived out an English spring)—and found fault with the Sun because of the sameness of his methods.

They criticised the babies. When a fresh infant was published in a house, the critics would call in a body to pass their judgment upon it, and the young mother would bring it down for them to sample.

“Did you ever see a child anything like that in this world before?” she would say, holding it out to them. “Isn’t it a wonderful baby? *You* never saw a child with legs like that, I know. Nurse says he’s the most extraordinary baby she ever attended. Bless him!”

But the critics did not think anything of it.

“Tut, tut,” they would reply, “there is nothing extraordinary about that child—no originality whatever. Why, it’s exactly like every other baby—bald head, red face, big mouth, and stumpy nose. Why, that’s only a weak imitation of the baby next door. It’s a plagiarism, that’s what that child is. You’ve been wasting your time, madam. If you can’t do anything more original than that, we should advise you to give up the business altogether.”

That was the end of criticism in that strange land.

“Oh! look here, we’ve had enough of you and your originality,” said the people to the critics, after that. “Why, *you* are not original, when one comes to think of it, and your criticisms are not original. You’ve all of you been saying exactly the same

thing ever since the time of Solomon. We are going to drown you and have a little peace."

"What, drown a critic!" cried the critics, "never heard of such a monstrous proceeding in our lives!"

"No, we flatter ourselves it is an original idea," replied the public, brutally. "You ought to be charmed with it. Out you come!"

So they took the critics out and drowned them, and then passed a short act, making criticism a capital offense.

After that, the art and literature of the country followed, somewhat, the methods of the quaint and curious school, but the land, notwithstanding, was a much more cheerful place to live in, I dreamed.

But I never finished telling you about the dream in which I thought I left my legs behind me when I went into a certain theater.

I dreamed that the ticket the man gave me for my legs was No. 19, and I was worried all through the performance for fear No. 61 should get hold of them, and leave me his instead. Mine are rather a fine pair of legs, and I am, I confess, a little proud of them—at all events, I prefer them to anybody else's. Besides, number sixty-one's might be a skinny pair, and not fit me.

It quite spoiled my evening, fretting about this.

Another extraordinary dream I had was one in which I dreamed that I was engaged to be married to my Aunt Jane. That was not, however, the extraordinary part of it; I have often known people to dream things like that. I knew a man who once

dreamed that he was actually married to his own mother-in-law! He told me that never in his life had he loved the alarm clock with more deep and grateful tenderness than he did that morning. The dream almost reconciled him to being married to his real wife. They lived quite happily together for a few days, after that dream.

No; the extraordinary part of my dream was, that I knew it was a dream. "What on earth will uncle say to this engagement?" I thought to myself, in my dream. "There's bound to be a row about it. We shall have a deal of trouble with uncle, I feel sure." And this thought quite troubled me until the sweet reflection came: "Ah! well, it's only a dream."

And I made up my mind that I would wake up as soon as uncle found out about the engagement, and leave him and Aunt Jane to fight the matter out between themselves.

It is a very great comfort, when the dream grows troubled and alarming, to feel that it is only a dream, and to know that we shall awake soon and be none the worse for it. We can dream out the foolish perplexity with a smile then.

Sometimes the dream of life grows strangely troubled and perplexing, and then he who meets dismay the bravest is he who feels that the fretful play *is* but a dream—a brief, uneasy dream of three score years and ten, or thereabouts, from which, in a little while, he will awake—at least, he dreams so.

How dull, how impossible life would be without

dreams—waking dreams, I mean—the dreams that we call “castles in the air,” built by the kindly hands of Hope! Were it not for the mirage of the oasis, drawing his footsteps ever onward, the weary traveler would lie down in the desert sand and die. It is the mirage of distant success, of happiness that, like the bunch of carrots fastened an inch beyond the donkey’s nose, seems always just within our reach, if only we will gallop fast enough, that makes us run so eagerly along the road of Life.

Providence, like a father with a tired child, lures us ever along the way with tales and promises, until, at the frowning gate that ends the road, we shrink back, frightened. Then, promises still more sweet he stoops and whispers in our ear, and timid yet partly reassured, and trying to hide our fears, we gather up all that is left of our little stock of hope and, trusting yet half afraid, push out our groping feet into the darkness.

CLOCKS.

THERE are two kinds of clocks. There is the clock that is always wrong, and that knows it is wrong, and glories in it; and there is the clock that is always right—except when you rely upon it, and then it is more wrong than you would think a clock *could* be in a civilized country.

I remember a clock of this latter type, that we had in the house when I was a boy, routing us all up at three o'clock one winter's morning. We had finished breakfast at ten minutes to four, and I got to school a little after five, and sat down on the step outside and cried, because I thought the world had come to an end; everything was so death-like!

The man who can live in the same house with one of these clocks, and not endanger his chance of heaven about once a month by standing up and telling it what he thinks of it, is either a dangerous rival to that old established firm, Job, or else he does not know enough bad language to make it worth his while to start saying anything at all.

The great dream of its life is to lure you on into trying to catch a train by it. For weeks and weeks it will keep the most perfect time. If there were

any difference in time between that clock and the sun, you would be convinced it was the sun, not the clock, that wanted seeing to. You feel that if that clock happened to get a quarter of a second fast, or the eighth of an instant slow, it would break its heart and die.

It is in this spirit of child-like faith in its integrity that, one morning, you gather your family around you in the passage, kiss your children, and afterward wipe your jammy mouth, poke your finger in the baby's eye, promise not to forget to order the coals, wave at last fond adieu with the umbrella, and depart for the railway-station.

I never have been quite able to decide, myself, which is the more irritating to run two miles at the top of your speed, and then to find, when you reach the station, that you are three-quarters of an hour too early ; or to stroll along leisurely the whole way, and dawdle about outside the booking-office, talking to some local idiot, and then to swagger carelessly on to the platform, just in time to see the train go out !

As for the other class of clocks—the common or always-wrong clocks—they are harmless enough. You wind them up at the proper intervals, and once or twice a week you put them right and “regulate” them, as you call it (and you might just as well try to “regulate” a London tom-cat). But you do all this, not from any selfish motives, but from a sense of duty to the clock itself. You want to feel that, whatever may happen, you have done the right thing by it, and that no blame can attach to you.

So far as looking to it for any return is concerned, that you never dream of doing, and consequently you are not disappointed. You ask what the time is, and the girl replies :

“Well, the clock in the dining-room says a quarter past two.”

But you are not deceived by this. You know that, as a matter of fact, it must be somewhere between nine and ten in the evening ; and, remembering that you noticed, as a curious circumstance, that the clock was only forty minutes past four, hours ago, you mildly admire its energies and resources, and wonder how it does it.

I myself possess a clock that for complicated unconventionality and light-hearted independence, could, I should think, give points to anything yet discovered in the chronometrical line. As a mere time-piece, it leaves much to be desired ; but, considered as a self-acting conundrum, it is full of interest and variety.

I heard of a man once who had a clock that he used to say was of no good to any one except himself, because he was the only man who understood it. He said it was an excellent clock, and one that you could thoroughly depend upon ; but you wanted to know it—to have studied its system. An outsider might be easily misled by it.

“For instance,” he would say, “when it strikes fifteen, and the hands point to twenty minutes past eleven, I know it is a quarter to eight.”

His acquaintanceship with that clock must cer-

tainly have given him an advantage over the cursory observer !

But the great charm about my clock is its reliable uncertainty. It works on no method whatever ; it is a pure emotionalist. One day it will be quite frolicsome, and gain three hours in the course of the morning, and think nothing of it ; and the next day it will wish it were dead, and be hardly able to drag itself along, and lose two hours out of every four, and stop altogether in the afternoon, too miserable to do anything ; and then, getting cheerful once more toward evening, will start off again of its own accord.

I do not care to talk much about this clock ; because when I tell the simple truth concerning it, people think I am exaggerating.

It is very discouraging to find, when you are straining every nerve to tell the truth, that people do not believe you, and fancy that you are exaggerating. It makes you feel inclined to go and exaggerate on purpose, just to show them the difference. I know I often feel tempted to do so myself—it is my early training that saves me.

We should always be very careful never to give way to exaggeration ; it is a habit that grows upon one.

And it is such a vulgar habit, too. In the old times, when poets and dry-goods salesmen were the only people who exaggerated, there was something clever and *distingué* about a reputation for “ a tendency to over, rather than to under-estimate the

mere bald facts." But everybody exaggerates nowadays. The art of exaggeration is no longer regarded as an "extra" in the modern bill of education; it is an essential requirement, held to be most needful for the battle of life.

The whole world exaggerates. It exaggerates everything, from the yearly number of bicycles sold to the yearly number of heathens converted—into the hope of salvation and more whiskey. Exaggeration is the basis of our trade, the fallow-field of our art and literature, the groundwork of our social life, the foundation of our political existence. As schoolboys, we exaggerate our fights and our marks and our fathers' debts. As men, we exaggerate our wares, we exaggerate our feelings, we exaggerate our incomes—except to the tax-collector, and to him we exaggerate our "outgoings"—we exaggerate our virtues; we even exaggerate our vices, and, being in reality the mildest of men, pretend we are dare-devil scamps.

We have sunk so low now that we try to *act* our exaggerations, and to live up to our lies. We call it "keeping up appearances;" and no more bitter phrase could, perhaps, have been invented to describe our childish folly.

If we possess a hundred pounds a year, do we not call it two? Our larder may be low and our grates be chill, but we are happy if the "world" (six acquaintances and a prying neighbor) gives us credit for one hundred and fifty. And, when we have five hundred, we talk of a thousand, and the all-import-

ant and beloved "world" (sixteen friends now, and two of them carriage-folks!) agree that we really must be spending seven hundred, or at all events, running into debt up to that figure; but the butcher and baker, who have gone into the matter with the housemaid, know better.

After awhile, having learned the trick, we launch out boldly and spend like Indian Princes—or rather *seem* to spend; for we know, by this time, how to purchase the seeming with the seeming, how to buy the appearance of wealth with the appearance of cash. And the dear old world—Beelzebub bless it! for it is his own child, sure enough; there is no mistaking the likeness, it has all his funny little ways—gathers round, applauding and laughing at the lie, and sharing in the cheat, and gloating over the thought of the blow that it knows must sooner or later fall on us from the Thor-like hammer of Truth.

And all goes merry as a witches' frolic—until the gray morning dawns.

Truth and fact are old-fashioned and out-of-date, my friends, fit only for the dull and vulgar to live by. Appearance, not reality, is what the clever dog grasps at in these clever days. We spurn the dull-brown solid earth; we build our lives and homes in the fair-seeming rainbow-land of shadow and chimera.

To ourselves, sleeping and waking there, *behind* the rainbow, there is no beauty in the house; only a chill damp mist in every room, and, over all, a

haunting fear of the hour when the gilded clouds will melt away, and let us fall—somewhat heavily, no doubt—upon the hard world underneath.

But, there! of what matter is *our* misery, *our* terror? To the stranger, our home appears fair and bright. The workers in the fields below look up and envy us our abode of glory and delight! If *they* think it pleasant, surely *we* should be content. Have we not been taught to live for others and not for ourselves, and are we not acting up bravely to the teaching—in this most curious method?

Ah! yes, we are self-sacrificing enough, and loyal enough in our devotion to this new-crowned king, the child of Prince Imposture and Princess Pretense. Never before was despot so blindly worshiped! Never had earthly sovereign yet such world-wide sway!

Man, if he would live, *must* worship. He looks around, and what to him, within the vision of his life, is the greatest and the best, that he falls down and does reverence to. To him whose eyes have opened on the nineteenth century, what nobler image can the universe produce than the figure of Falsehood in stolen robes? It is cunning and brazen and hollow-hearted, and it realizes his soul's ideal, and he falls and kisses its feet, and clings to its skinny knees, swearing fealty to it for evermore!

Ah! he is a mighty monarch, bladder-bodied King Humbug! Come, let us build up temples of hewn shadows wherein we may adore him, *safe*

from the light. Let us raise him aloft upon our Brummagem shields. Long live our coward, false-hearted chief!—fit leader for such soldiers as we! Long live the Lord-of-Lies, anointed! Long live poor King Appearances, to whom all mankind bows the knee!

But we must hold him aloft very carefully, oh, my brother warriors! He needs much “keeping up.” He has no bones and sinews of his own, the poor old flimsy fellow! If we take our hands from him, he will fall a heap of worn-out rags, and the angry wind will whirl him away, and leave us forlorn. Oh, let us spend our lives keeping him up, and serving him, and making him great—that is, evermore puffed out with air and nothingness—until he burst, and we along with him!

Burst one day he must, as it is in the nature of bubbles to burst, especially when they grow big. Meanwhile, he still reigns over us, and the world grows more and more a world of pretense and exaggeration and lies; and he who pretends and exaggerates and lies the most successfully, is the greatest of us all.

The world is a gingerbread fair, and we all stand outside our booths and point to the gorgeous-colored pictures, and beat the big drum and brag. Brag! brag! Life is one great game of brag!

“Buy my soap, oh ye people, and ye will never look old, and the hair will grow again on your bald places, and ye will never be poor or unhappy again; and mine is the only true soap. Oh, beware of spurious imitations!”

"Buy my lotion, all ye that suffer from pains in the head, or the stomach, or the feet, or that have broken arms, or broken hearts, or objectionable mothers-in-law; and drink one bottle a day, and all your troubles will be ended."

"Come to my church, all ye that want to go to Heaven, and buy my penny weekly guide, and pay my pew-rates; and, pray ye, have nothing to do with my misguided brother over the road. *This* is the only safe way!"

"Oh, vote for me, my noble and intelligent electors, and send our party into power, and the world shall be a new place, and there shall be no sin or sorrow any more! And each free and independent voter shall have a bran new Utopia made on purpose for him, according to his own ideas, with a good-sized, extra-unpleasant purgatory attached, to which he can send everybody he does not like. Oh! do not miss this chance!"

Oh! listen to my philosophy, it is the best and deepest. Oh! hear my songs, they are the sweetest. Oh! buy my pictures, they alone are true art. Oh! read my books, they are the finest.

Oh! *I* am the greatest cheesemonger, *I* am the greatest soldier, *I* am the greatest statesman, *I* am the greatest poet, *I* am the greatest showman, *I* am the greatest mountebank, *I* am the greatest editor, and *I* am the greatest patriot. *We* are the greatest nation. *We* are the only good people. *Ours* is the only true religion. Bah! how we all yell!

How we all brag and bounce, and beat the drum

and shout ; and nobody believes a word we utter ; and the people ask one another, saying :

“ How can we tell who is the greatest and the cleverest among all these shrieking braggarts ? ”

And they answer :

“ There is none great or clever. The great and clever men are not here ; there is no place for them in this pandemonium of charlatans and quacks. The men you see here are crowing cocks. We suppose the greatest and the best of *them* are they who crow the loudest and the longest ; that is the only test of *their* merits.”

Therefore, what is left for us to do, but to crow ? And the best and greatest of us all, is he who crows the loudest and the longest on this little dunghill that we call our world !

Well, I was going to tell you about our clock.

It was my wife's idea, getting it, in the first instance. We had been to dinner at the Buggles', and Buggles had just bought a clock—“ picked it up in Essex,” was the way he described the transaction. Buggles is always going about “ picking up ” things. He will stand before an old carved bedstead, weighing about three tons, and say : “ Yes—pretty little thing ! I picked it up in Holland ; ” as though he had found it by the roadside, and slipped it into his umbrella when nobody was looking !

Buggles was rather full of this clock. It was of the good old-fashioned “ grandfather ” type. It stood eight feet high, in a carved-oak case, and

had a deep, sonorous, solemn tick, that made a pleasant accompaniment to the after-dinner chat, and seemed to fill the room with an air of homely dignity.

We discussed the clock, and Buggles said how he loved the sound of its slow, grave tick; and how, when all the house was still, and he and it were sitting up alone together, it seemed like some wise old friend talking to him, and telling him about the old days and the old ways of thought, and the old life and the old people.

The clock impressed my wife very much. She was very thoughtful all the way home, and, as we went upstairs to our flat, she said, "Why could not we have a clock like that?" She said it would seem like having some one in the house to take care of us all—she should fancy it was looking after baby!

I have a man in Northamptonshire from whom I buy old furniture now and then, and to him I applied. He answered by return to say that he had got exactly the very thing I wanted. (He always has. I am very lucky in this respect.) It was the quaintest and most old-fashioned clock he had come across for a long while, and he enclosed photograph and full particulars; should he send it up?

From the photograph and the particulars, it seemed, as he said, the very thing, and I told him, "Yes; send it up at once."

Three days afterward, there came a knock at the

door—there had been other knocks at the door before this, of course ; but I am dealing merely with the history of the clock. The girl said a couple of men were outside, and wanted to see me, and I went to them.

I found they were Pickford's carriers, and glancing at the way-bill, I saw that it was my clock that they had brought, and I said, airily, " Oh, yes, it's quite right ; bring it up ! "

They said they were very sorry, but that was just the difficulty. They could not get it up.

I went down with them, and wedged securely across the second landing of the staircase, I found a box which I should have judged to be the original case in which Cleopatra's Needle came over.

They said that was my clock.

I brought down a chopper and a crowbar, and we sent out and collected in two extra hired ruffians and the five of us worked away for half an hour and got the clock out ; after which the traffic up and down the staircase was resumed, much to the satisfaction of the other tenants.

We then got the clock upstairs and put it together, and I fixed it in the corner of the dining-room.

At first it exhibited a strong desire to topple over and fall on people, but by the liberal use of nails and screws and bits of firewood, I made life in the same room with it possible, and then, being exhausted. I had my wounds dressed, and went to bed.

In the middle of the night my wife woke me up in a great state of alarm, to say that the clock had just struck thirteen, and who did I think was going to die?

I said I did not know, but hoped it might be the next-door dog.

My wife said she had a presentiment it meant baby. There was no comforting her; she cried herself to sleep again.

During the course of the morning, I succeeded in persuading her that she must have made a mistake, and she consented to smile once more. In the afternoon the clock struck thirteen again.

This renewed all her fears. She was convinced now that both baby and I were doomed, and that she would be left a childless widow. I tried to treat the matter as a joke, and this only made her more wretched. She said that she could see I really felt as she did, and was only pretending to be light-hearted for her sake, and she said she would try and bear it bravely.

The person she chiefly blamed was Buggles.

In the night the clock gave us another warning, and my wife accepted it for her Aunt Maria, and seemed resigned. She wished, however, that I had never had the clock, and wondered when, if ever, I should get cured of my absurd craze for filling the house with tomfoolery.

The next day the clock struck thirteen four times and this cheered her up. She said that if we were all going to die, it did not so much matter. Most

likely there was a fever or a plague coming, and we should all be taken together.

She was quite light-hearted over it!

After that the clock went on and killed every friend and relation we had, and then it started on the neighbors.

It struck thirteen all day long for months, until we were sick of slaughter, and there could not have been a human being left alive for miles around.

Then it turned over a new leaf, and gave up murdering folks, and took to striking mere harmless thirty-nines and forty-ones. Its favorite number now is thirty-two, but once a day it strikes forty-nine. It never strikes more than forty-nine. I don't know why—I have never been able to understand why—but it doesn't.

It does not strike at regular intervals, but when it feels it wants to and would be better for it. Sometimes it strikes three or four times within the same hour, and at other times it will go for half-a-day without striking at all.

He is an odd old fellow!

I have thought now and then of having him "seen to," and made to keep regular hours and be respectable; but, somehow, I seem to have grown to love him as he is with his daring mockery of Time.

He certainly has not much respect for it. He seems to go out of his way almost to openly insult it. He calls half-past two thirty-eight o'clock, and in twenty minutes from then he says it is one!

Is it that he really has grown to feel contempt for his master, and wishes to show it? They say no man is a hero to his valet; may it be that even stony-face Time himself is but a short-lived, puny mortal—a little greater than some others, that is all—to the dim eyes of this old servant of his? Has he, ticking, ticking, all these years, come at last to see into the littleness of that Time that looms so great to our awed human eyes?

Is he saying, as he grimly laughs, and strikes his thirty-fives and forties: “Bah! I know you, Time, godlike and dread though you seem. What are you but a phantom—a dream—like the rest of us here? Ay, less, for you will pass away and be no more. Fear him not, immortal men. Time is but the shadow of the world upon the background of Eternity!”

EVERGREENS.

THEY look so dull and dowdy in the spring weather, when the snow drops and the crocuses are putting on their dainty frocks of white and mauve and yellow, and the baby-buds from every branch are peeping with bright eyes out on the world, and stretching forth soft little leaves toward the coming gladness of their lives. They stand apart, so cold and hard amid the stirring hope and joy that are throbbing all around them.

And in the deep full summer-time, when all the rest of nature dons its richest garb of green, and the roses clamber round the porch, and the grass waves waist-high in the meadow, and the fields are gay with flowers—they seem duller and dowdier than ever then, wearing their faded winter's dress, looking so dingy and old and worn.

In the mellow days of autumn, when the trees, like dames no longer young, seek to forget their aged looks under gorgeous bright-toned robes of gold and brown and purple, and the grain is yellow in the fields, and the ruddy fruit hangs clustering from the drooping boughs, and the wooded hills in their thousand hues stretched like leafy rainbows

above the vale—ah! surely they look their dullest and dowdiest then. The gathered glory of the dying year is all around them. They seem so out of place among it, in their somber, everlasting green, like poor relations at a rich man's feast. It is such a weather-beaten old green dress. So many summers' suns have blistered it, so many winters' rains have beat upon it—such a shabby, mean, old dress; it is the only one they have!

They do not look quite so bad when the weary winter weather is come, when the flowers are dead, and the hedgerows are bare, and the trees stand out leafless against the gray sky, and the birds are all silent, and the fields are brown, and the vine clings round the cottages with skinny, fleshless arms, and they alone of all things are unchanged, they alone of all the forest are green, they alone of all the verdant host stand firm to front the cruel winter.

They are not very beautiful, only strong and stanch and steadfast—the same in all times, through all seasons—ever the same, ever green. The spring cannot brighten them, the summer cannot scorch them, the autumn cannot wither them, the winter cannot kill them.

There are evergreen men and women in the world, praise be to God! Not many of them, but a few. They are not the showy folk; they are not the clever, attractive folk. (Nature is an old-fashioned shopkeeper; she never puts her best goods in the window.) They are only the quiet, strong folk; they are stronger than the world, stronger than

life or death, stronger than Fate. The storms of life sweep over them, and the rains beat down upon them, and the biting frosts creep round them; but the winds and the rains and the frosts pass away, and they are still standing, green and straight. They love the sunshine of life in their undemonstrative way—its pleasures, its joys. But calamity cannot bow them, sorrow and affliction bring not despair to their serene faces, only a little tightening of the lips; the sun of our prosperity makes the green of their friendship no brighter, the frost of our adversity kills not the leaves of their affection.

Let us lay hold of such men and women; let us grapple them to us with hooks of steel; let us cling to them as we would to rocks in a tossing sea. We do not think very much of them in the summer-time of life. They do not flatter us or gush over us. They do not always agree with us. They are not always the most delightful society, by any means. They are not good talkers, nor—which would do just as well, perhaps better—do they make enraptured listeners. They have awkward manners, and very little tact. They do not shine to advantage beside our society friends. They do not dress well; they look altogether somewhat dowdy and commonplace. We almost hope they will not see us when we meet them just outside the club. They are not the sort of people we want to ostentatiously greet in crowded places. It is not till the days of our need that we learn to love and know them. It is not till the winter that the birds see the wisdom of building their nests in the evergreen trees.

And we, in our spring-time folly of youth, pass them by with a sneer, the uninteresting, colorless evergreens, and, like silly children with nothing but eyes in their heads, stretch out our hands and cry for the pretty flowers. We will make our little garden of life such a charming, fairy-like spot, the envy of every passer-by ! There shall nothing grow in it but lilies and roses, and the cottage we will cover all over with Virginia-creeper. And, oh, how sweet it will look, under the dancing summer sunlight, when the soft west breeze is blowing !

And, oh, how we shall stand and shiver there when the rain and the east wind come !

Oh, you foolish, foolish little maidens, with your dainty heads so full of un wisdom ! how often—oh ! how often, are you to be warned that it is not always the sweetest thing in lovers that is the best material to make a good-wearing husband out of ? “The lover sighing like a furnace” will not go on sighing like a furnace forever. That furnace will go out. He will become the husband, “full of strange oaths—jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,” and grow “into the lean and slipper’d pantaloon.” How will he wear ? There will be no changing him if he does not suit, no sending him back to be altered, no having him let out a bit where he is too tight and hurts you, no having him taken in where he is too loose, no laying him by when the cold comes, to wrap yourself up in something warmer. As he is when you select him, so he will have to last you all your life—through all changes, through all seasons.

Yes, he looks very pretty now—handsome pattern, if the colors are fast and it does not fade—feels soft and warm to the touch. How will he stand the world's rough weather? How will he stand life's wear and tear?

He looks so manly and brave. His hair curls so divinely. He dresses so well (I wonder if the tailor's bill is paid?) He kisses your hand so gracefully. He calls you such pretty names. His arm feels so strong around you. His fine eyes are so full of tenderness as they gaze down into yours.

Will he kiss your hand when it is wrinkled and old? Will he call you pretty names when the baby is crying in the night, and you cannot keep it quiet—or, better still, will he sit up and take a turn with it? Will his arm be strong around you in the days of trouble? Will his eyes shine above you full of tenderness when yours are growing dim?

And you boys, you silly boys! what materials for a wife do you think you will get out of the empty-headed coquettes you are raving and tearing your hair about. Oh! yes, she is very handsome, and she dresses with exquisite taste (the result of devoting the whole of her heart, mind and soul to the subject, and never allowing her thoughts to be distracted from it by any other mundane or celestial object whatsoever); and she is very agreeable and entertaining and fascinating; and she will go on looking handsome, and dressing exquisitely, and being agreeable and entertaining and fascinating just as much after you have married her as before—more so, if anything.

But *you* will not get the benefit of it. Husbands will be charmed and fascinated by her in plenty, but *you* will not be among them. You will run the show, you will pay all the expenses, do all the work. Your performing lady will be most affable and enchanting to the crowd. They will stare at her, and admire her, and talk to her, and flirt with her. And you will be able to feel that you are quite a benefactor to your fellow-men and women—to your fellow-men especially—in providing such delightful amusement for them, free. But *you* will not get any of the fun yourself.

You will not get the handsome looks. *You* will get the jaded face, and the dull, lusterless eyes, and the untidy hair with the dye showing on it. You will not get the exquisite dresses. *You* will get dirty, shabby frocks and slommicking dressing-gowns, such as your cook would be ashamed to wear.

You will not get the charm and fascination. *You* will get the after-headaches, the complainings and grumblings, the silence and sulkiness, the weariness and lassitude and ill-temper that comes as such a relief after working hard all day at being pleasant!

It is not the people who shine in society, but the people who brighten up the back parlor; not the people who are charming when they are out, but the people who are charming when they are in, that are good to *live* with. It is not the brilliant men and women, but the simple, strong, restful men and women, that make the best traveling companions for the road of life. The men and women

who will only laugh as they put up the umbrella when the rain begins to fall, who will trudge along cheerfully through the mud and over the stony places—the comrades who will lay their firm hand on ours and strengthen us when the way is dark and we are growing weak—the evergreen men and women, who, like the holly, are at their brightest and best when the blast blows chilliest—the stanch men and women!

It is a grand thing this stanchness. It is the difference between a dog and a sheep—between a man and an oyster.

Women, as a rule, are stancher than men. There are women that you feel you could reply upon to the death. But very few men indeed have this dog-like virtue. Men, taking them generally, are more like cats. You may live with them and call them yours for twenty years, but you can never feel *quite* sure of them. You never know exactly what they are thinking of. You never feel easy in your mind as to the result of the next-door neighbor's laying down a Brussels carpet in his kitchen.

We have no school for the turning-out of stanch men in this nineteenth century. In the old, earnest times, war made men stanch and true to each other. We have learned up a good many glib phrases about the wickedness of war, and we thank God that we live in these peaceful, trading times, wherein we can—and do—devote the whole of our thoughts and energies to robbing and cheating and swindling one another—to “doing” our friends, and overcom-

ing our enemies by trickery and lies—wherein, undisturbed by the wicked ways of fighting-men, we can cultivate to better perfection the “smartness,” the craft, and the cunning, and all the other “business-like” virtues on which we so pride ourselves, and which were so neglected and treated with so little respect in the bad old age of violence, when men chose lions and eagles for their symbols rather than foxes.

There is a good deal to be said against war. I am not prepared to maintain that war did not bring with it disadvantages, but there can be no doubt that, for the noblest work of Nature—the making of men—it was a splendid manufactory. It taught men courage. It trained them in promptness and determination, in strength of brain and strength of hand. From its stern lessons they learned fortitude in suffering, coolness in danger, cheerfulness under reverses. Chivalry, Reverence, and Loyalty are the beautiful children of ugly War. But, above all gifts, the greatest gift it gave to men was stanchness.

It first taught men to be true to one another; to be true to their duty, true to their post; to be in all things faithful, even unto death.

The martyrs that died at the stake; the explorers that fought with Nature and opened up the world for us; the reformers (they had to do something more than talk in those days) who won for us our liberties; the men who gave their lives to science and art, when science and art brought, not as now,

fame and fortune. but shame and penury—they sprang from the loins of the rugged men who had learned, on many a grim battlefield, to laugh at pain and death, who had had it hammered into them, with many a hard blow, that the whole duty of a man in this world is to be true to his trust, and fear not.

Do you remember the story of the old Viking who had been converted to Christianity, and who, just as they were about, with much joy, to baptize him, paused and asked: "But what—if this, as you tell me, is the only way to the true Valhalla—what has become of my comrades, my friends who are dead, who died in the old faith—where are they?"

The priests, confused, replied there could be no doubt those unfortunate folk had gone to a place they would rather not mention.

"Then," said the old warrior, stepping back, "I will not be baptized. I will go along with my own people."

He had lived with them, fought beside them; they were his people. He would stand by them to the end—of eternity. Most assuredly, a very shocking old Viking! But I think it might be worth while giving up our civilization and our culture to get back to the days when they made men like that.

The only reminder of such times that we have left us now, is the bull-dog; and he is fast dying out—the pity of it! What a splendid old dog he is! so grim, so silent, so stanch; so terrible, when he has got his idea of his duty clear before him; so

absurdly meek, when it is only himself that is concerned.

He is the gentlest, too, and the most lovable of all dogs. He does not look it. The sweetness of his disposition would not strike the casual observer at first glance. He resembles the gentleman spoken of in the oft-quoted stanza :

'E's all right when yer knows 'im.
But yer've got to know 'im fust.

The first time I ever met a bull-dog—to speak to, that is—was many years ago. We were lodging down in the country, an orphan friend of mine named George, and myself, and one night, coming home late from some dissolving views we found the family had gone to bed. They had left a light in our room, however, and we went in and sat down, and began to take off our boots.

And then, for the first time, we noticed on the hearthrug a bull-dog. A dog with a more thoughtfully ferocious expression—a dog with, apparently, a heart more dead to all ennobling and civilizing sentiments—I have never seen. As George said, he looked more like some heathen idol than a happy English dog.

He appeared to have been waiting for us ; and he rose up and greeted us with a ghastly grin, and got between us and the door.

We smiled at him—a sickly, propitiatory smile. We said, “ Good dog—poor fellow ! ” and we asked him, in tones implying that the question could admit

of no negative, if he was not a "nice old chap." We did not really think so. We had our own private opinion concerning him, and it was unfavorable. But we did not express it. We would not have hurt his feelings for the world. He was a visitor, our guest, so to speak—and, as well-brought-up young men, we felt that the right thing to do was for us to prevent his gaining any hint that we were not glad to see him, and to make him feel as little as possible the awkwardness of his position.

I think we succeeded. He was singularly unembarrassed, and far more at his ease than even we were. He took but little notice of our flattering remarks, but was much drawn toward George's legs. George used to be, I remember, rather proud of his legs. I could never see enough in them myself to excuse George's vanity; indeed, they always struck me as lumpy. It is only fair to acknowledge, however, that they quite fascinated that bull-dog. He walked over and criticized them with the air of a long-baffled connoisseur who had at last found his ideal. At the termination of his inspection he distinctly smiled.

George, who at that time was modest and bashful, blushed and drew them up on to the chair. On the dog's displaying a desire to follow them, George moved up on to the table, and squatted there in the middle, nursing his knees. George's legs being lost to him, the dog appeared inclined to console himself with mine. I went and sat beside George on the table.

Sitting with your feet drawn up in front of you, on a small and rickety one-legged table, is a most trying exercise, especially if you are not used to it. George and I both felt our position keenly. We did not like to call out for help, and bring the family down. We were proud young men, and we feared lest, to the unsympathetic eye of the comparative stranger, the spectacle we should present might not prove imposing.

So we sat on in silence for about half an hour, the dog keeping a reproachful eye upon us from the nearest chair, and displaying elephantine delight whenever we made any movement suggestive of climbing down.

At the end of the half hour we discussed the advisability of "chancing it," but decided not to. "We should never," George said, "confound foolhardiness with courage."

"Courage," he continued—George had quite a gift for maxims—"courage is the wisdom of manhood; foolhardiness, the folly of youth."

He said that to get down from the table while that dog remained in the room, would clearly prove us to be possessed of the latter quality; so we restrained ourselves, and sat on.

We sat on for over an hour, by which time, having both grown careless of life and indifferent to the voice of Wisdom, we did "chance it;" and throwing the table-cloth over our would-be murderer, charged for the door and got out.

The next morning we complained to our land-

lady of her carelessness in leaving wild beasts about the place, and we gave her a brief, if not exactly truthful, history of the business.

Instead of the tender womanly sympathy we had expected, the old lady sat down in the easy chair and burst out laughing.

"What! old Boozer," she exclaimed, "you was afraid of old Boozer! Why, bless you, he wouldn't hurt a worm! He ain't got a tooth in his head, he ain't; we has to feed him with a spoon; and I'm sure the way the cat chivies him about must be enough to make his life a burden to him. I expect he wanted you to nurse him; he's used to being nursed."

And that was the brute that had kept us sitting on a table, with our boots off, for over an hour on a chilly night!

Another bull-dog exhibition that occurs to me was one given by my uncle. He had had a bull-dog—a young one—given to him by a friend. It was a grand dog, so his friend had told him; all it wanted was training—it had not been properly trained. My uncle did not profess to know much about the training of bull-dogs; but it seemed a simple enough matter, so he thanked the man, and took his prize home at the end of a rope.

"Have we got to live in the house with *this*?" asked my aunt, indignantly, coming in to the room about an hour after the dog's advent, followed by the quadruped himself, wearing an idiotically self-satisfied air.

"That!" exclaimed my uncle, in astonishment; "why, it's a splendid dog. His father was honorably mentioned only last year at the Aquarium."

"Ah, well, all I can say is, that his son isn't going the way to get honorably mentioned in this neighborhood," replied my aunt, with bitterness; "he's just finished killing poor Mrs. McSlanger's cat, if you want to know what he has been doing. And a pretty row there'll be about it, too!"

"Can't we hush it up?" said my uncle.

"Hush it up?" retorted my aunt. "If you'd heard the row, you wouldn't sit there and talk like a fool. And if you'll take my advice," added my aunt, "you'll set to work on this 'training,' or whatever it is, that has got to be done to the dog, before any human life is lost."

My uncle was too busy to devote any time to the dog for the next day or so, and all that could be done was to keep the animal carefully confined to the house.

And a nice time we had with him! It was not that the animal was bad-hearted. He meant well—he tried to do his duty. What was wrong with him was that he was too hard-working. He wanted to do too much. He started with an exaggerated and totally erroneous notion of his duties and responsibilities. His idea was that he had been brought into the house for the purpose of preventing any living human soul from coming near it and of preventing any person who might by chance have managed to slip in from ever again leaving it.

We endeavored to induce him to take a less exalted view of his position, but in vain. That was the conception he had formed in his own mind concerning his earthly task, and that conception he insisted on living up to with, what appeared to us to be, unnecessary conscientiousness.

He so effectually frightened away all the trades people, that they at last refused to enter the gate. All that they would do was to bring their goods and drop them over the fence into the front garden, from where we had to go and fetch them as we wanted them.

"I wish you'd run into the garden," my aunt would say to me—I was stopping with them at the time—"and see if you can find any sugar; I think there's some under the big rose-bush. If not, you'd better go to Jones' and order some."

And on the cook's inquiring what she should get ready for lunch, my aunt would say:

"Well, I'm sure, Jane, I hardly know. What have we? Are there any chops in the garden, or was it a bit of steak that I noticed on the lawn?"

On the second afternoon the plumbers came to do a little job to the kitchen boiler. The dog, being engaged at the time in the front of the house, driving away the postman, did not notice their arrival. He was broken-hearted at finding them there when he got downstairs, and evidently blamed himself most bitterly. Still, there they were, all owing to his carelessness, and the only thing to be done now was to see that they did not escape.

There were three plumbers (it always takes three plumbers to do a job; the first man comes on ahead to tell you that the second man will be there soon, the second man comes to say that he can't stop, and the third man follows to ask if the first man has been there); and that faithful, dumb animal kept them pinned up in the kitchen—fancy wanting to keep plumbers in a house longer than is absolutely necessary!—for five hours, until my uncle came home; and the bill ran: "Self and two men engaged six hours, repairing boiler-tap, 18s.; material, 2d.; total 18s. 2d."

He took a dislike to the cook from the very first. We did not blame him for this. She was a disagreeable old woman, and we did not think much of her ourselves. But when it came to keeping her out of the kitchen, so that she could not do her work, and my aunt and uncle had to cook the dinner themselves, assisted by the housemaid—a willing-enough girl, but necessarily inexperienced—we felt that the woman was being subject to persecution.

My uncle, after this, decided that the dog's training must be no longer neglected. The man next door but one always talked as if he knew a lot about sporting matters, and to him my uncle went for advice as to how to set about it.

"Oh, yes," said the man, cheerfully, "very simple thing, training a bull-dog. Wants patience, that's all."

"Oh, that will be all right," said my uncle; "it can't want much more than living in the same

house with him before he's trained does. How do you start?"

"Well, I'll tell you," said next-door-but-one. "You take him up into a room where there's not much furniture, and you shut the door and bolt it."

"I see," said my uncle.

"Then you place him on the floor in the middle of the room, and you go down on your knees in front of him, and begin to irritate him."

"Oh!"

"Yes—and you go on irritating him until you have made him quite savage."

"Which, from what I know of the dog, won't take long," observed my uncle thoughtfully.

"So much the better. The moment he gets savage he will fly at you."

My uncle agreed that the idea seemed plausible.

"He will fly at your throat," continued the next-door-but-one man, "and this is where you will have to be careful. *As* he springs toward you, and *before* he gets hold of you, you must hit him a fair straight blow on his nose, and knock him down."

"Yes, I see what you mean."

"Quite so—well, the moment you have knocked him down, he will jump up and go for you again. You must knock him down again; and you must keep on doing this, until the dog is thoroughly cowed and exhausted. Once he is thoroughly cowed, the thing's done—dog's as gentle as a lamb after that."

"Oh!" says my uncle, rising from his chair, "you think that a good way, do you?"

"Certainly," replied the next-door-but-one man; "t never fails."

"Oh! I wasn't doubting it," said my uncle; "only it's just occurred to me that, as you understand the knack of these things, perhaps *you'd* like to come in and try *your* hand on the dog? We can give you a room quite to yourselves; and I'll undertake that nobody comes near to interfere with you. And if—if," continued my uncle, with that kindly thoughtfulness which ever distinguished his treatment of others, "*if*, by any chance, you should miss hitting the dog at the proper critical moment, or, if *you* should get cowed and exhausted first, instead of the dog—why, I shall only be too pleased to take the whole burden of the funeral expenses on my own shoulders; and I hope you know me well enough to feel sure that the arrangements will be tasteful, and, at the same time, unostentatious!"

And out my uncle walked.

We next consulted the butcher, who agreed that the prize-ring method was absurd, especially when recommended to a short-winded, elderly family man, and who recommended, instead, plenty of outdoor exercise for the dog, under my uncle's strict supervision and control.

"Get a fairly long chain for him," said the butcher, "and take him out for a good stiff run every evening. Never let him get away from you; make him mind you, and bring him home always

thoroughly exhausted. You stick to that for a month or two, regular, and you'll have him like a little child."

"Um!—seems to me that I'm going to get more training over his job than anybody else," muttered my uncle, as he thanked the man and left the shop; "but I suppose it's got to be done. Wish I'd never had the d—— dog now!"

So, religiously, every evening, my uncle would fasten a long chain to that poor dog, and drag him away from his happy home with the idea of exhausting him; and the dog would come back as fresh as paint, my uncle behind him, panting and clamoring for brandy.

My uncle said he should never have dreamed there could have been such stirring times in this prosaic nineteenth century as he had, training that dog.

Oh, the wild, wild scamperings over the breezy common—the dog trying to catch a swallow, and my uncle, unable to hold him back, following at the other end of the chain!

Oh, the merry frolics in the fields, when the dog wanted to kill a cow, and the cow wanted to kill the dog, and they each dodged round my uncle, trying to do it!

And, oh, the pleasant chats with the old ladies when the dog wound the chain into a knot around their legs, and upset them, and my uncle had to sit down in the road beside them, and untie them before they could get up again!

But a crisis came at last. It was a Saturday afternoon—uncle being exercised by dog in usual way—nervous children playing in road, see dog, scream, and run—playful young dog thinks it a game, jerks chain out of uncle's grasp, and flies after them—uncle flies after dog, calling it names—fond parent in front garden, seeing beloved children chased by savage dog, followed by careless owner, flies after uncle, calling *him* names—householders come to doors and cry, "Shame!"—also throw things at dog—things don't hit dog, hit uncle—things that don't hit uncle, hit fond parent—through the village and up the hill, over the bridge and round by the green—grand run, mile and a half without a break! Children sink exhausted—dog gambols up among them—children go into fits—fond parent and uncle come up together, both breathless.

"Why don't you call your dog off, you wicked old man?"

"Because I can't recollect his name, you old fool, you!"

Fond parent accuses uncle of having set dog on—uncle, indignant, reviles fond parent—exasperated fond parent attacks uncle—uncle retaliates with umbrella—faithful dog comes to assistance of uncle, and inflicts great injury on fond parent—arrival of police—dog attacks police—uncle and fond parent both taken into custody—uncle fined five pounds and costs for keeping a ferocious dog at large—uncle fined five pounds and costs for assault on fond

parent—uncle fined five pounds and cost for assault on police!

My uncle gave the dog away soon after that. He did not waste him. He gave him as a wedding-present to a near relation.

But the saddest story I ever heard in connection with a bull-dog, was one told by my aunt herself.

Now you can rely upon this story, because it is not one of mine, it is one of my aunt's, and she would scorn to tell a lie. This is a story you could tell to the heathen, and feel that you were teaching them the truth and doing them good. They give this story out at all the Sunday-schools in our part of the country, and draw moral lessons from it. It is a story that a little child can believe.

It happened in the old crinoline days. My aunt, who was then living in a country-town, had gone out shopping one morning, and was standing in the High Street, talking to a lady friend, a Mrs. Gumworthy, the doctor's wife. She (my aunt) had on a new crinoline that morning, in which, to use her own expression, she rather fancied herself. It was a tremendously big one, as stiff as a wire-fence; and it "set" beautifully.

They were standing in front of Jenkins', the draper's; and my aunt thinks that it—the crinoline—must have got caught up in something, and an opening thus left between it and the ground. However this may be, certain it is that an absurdly large and powerful bull-dog, who was fooling round about

there at the time, managed, somehow or other, to squirm in under my aunt's crinoline, and effectually imprison himself beneath it.

Finding himself suddenly in a dark and gloomy chamber, the dog, naturally enough, got frightened, and made frantic rushes to get out. But whichever way he charged, there was the crinoline in front of him. As he flew, he, of course, carried it before him, and with the crinoline, of course, went my aunt.

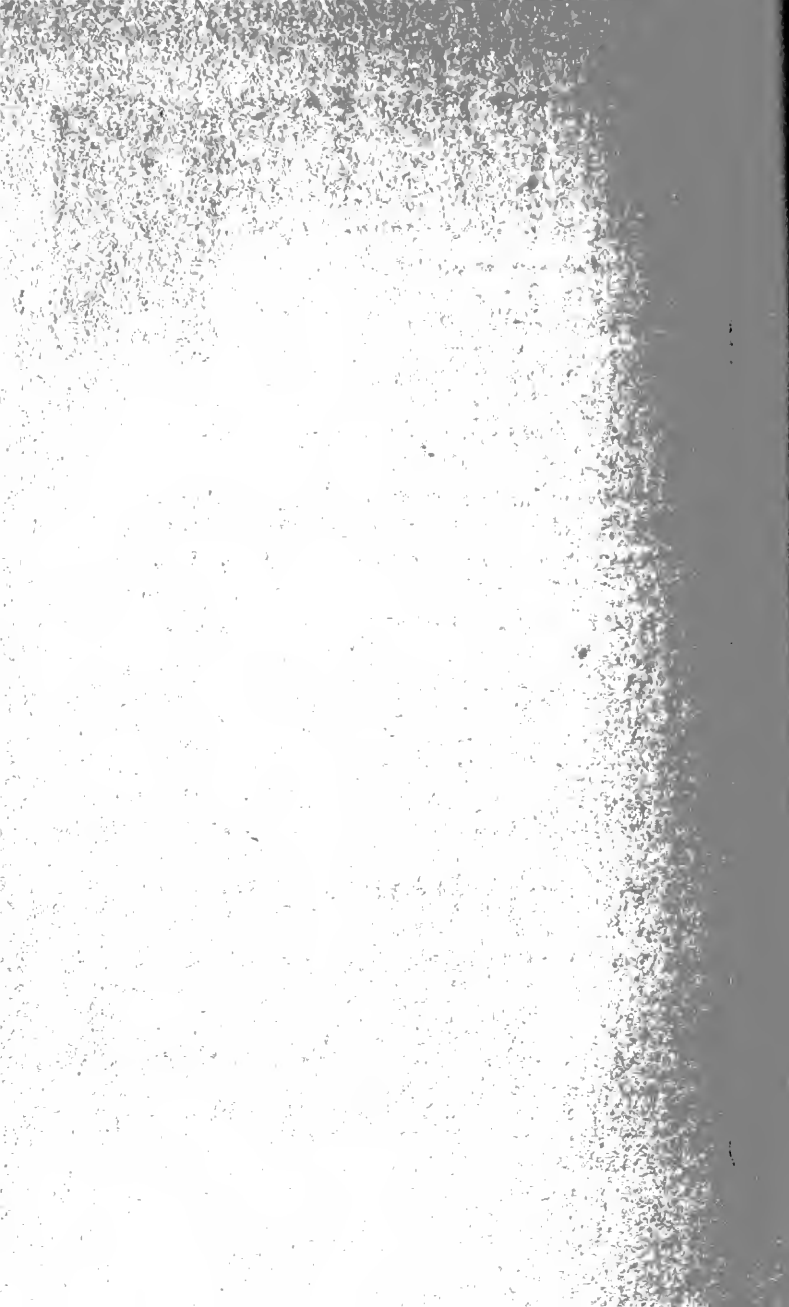
But nobody knew the explanation. My aunt herself did not know what had happened. Nobody had seen the dog creep inside the crinoline. All that the people did see was a staid and eminently respectable middle-aged lady suddenly, and without any apparent reason, throw her umbrella down in the road, fly up the High Street at the rate of ten miles an hour, rush across it at the imminent risk of her life, dart down it again on the other side, rush sideways, like an excited crab, into a grocer's shop, run three times round the shop, upsetting the whole stock-in-trade, come out of the shop backward and knock down a postman, dash into the roadway and spin round twice, hover for a moment, undecided, on the curb, and then away up the hill again, as if she had only just started, all the while screaming out at the top of her voice for somebody to stop her!

Of course, everybody thought she was mad. The people flew before her like chaff before the wind. In less than five seconds the High Street

was a desert. The townsfolk scampered into their shops and houses and barricaded the doors. Brave men dashed out and caught up little children and bore them to places of safety amid cheers. Carts and carriages were abandoned, while the drivers climbed up lamp-posts !

What would have happened had the affair gone on much longer—whether my aunt would have been shot, or the fire-engine brought into requisition against her—it is impossible, having regard to the terrified state of the crowd, to say. Fortunately for her, she became exhausted. With one despairing shriek she gave way, and sat down on the dog ; and peace reigned once again in that sweet rural town.

THE END.



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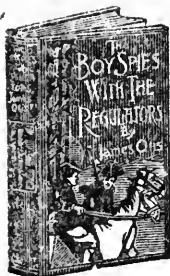
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